University of Dayton

Towards a Theology
of
Christian Communications

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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS

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The thesis attempts to map out a path towards an authentic, living theology of Christian communications.

To begin, the thesis contends that the Church needs but does not have a broadly inclusive, realistic, and widely accepted theology of Christian communications. It, therefore, proposes a dynamic, experience-based, and spirit-filled approach towards developing and maintaining such a theology.

The thesis suggests that communion ecclesiology is an appropriate starting point for the approach. It shows how the theological method of Bernard Lonergan can be used to construct a framework for Christian communications theology that is founded on communion ecclesiology.

The thesis then illustrates how a framework for Christian communications theology thus developed is in harmony with the lived ecclesiology of the contemporary Church, that is, with the salient communications theories of Marshall McLuhan and Pierre Babin, and with the social communications advocacy of the Catholic magisterium.

Finally, the thesis identifies a number of distinct characteristics of Christian communications that would emerge within the proposed theological framework and concludes with some potential long-term ramifications of this approach for the Church and society as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Church is a great mystery,

and how do we communicate mystery?

- Pope John Paul II[1]

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[1] *The Tablet*, (London: November 7, 1987), p. 1203.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1931, at the inauguration of Vatican Radio, Pope Pius XI called on the Church to enter with courage and enthusiasm the modern era of communications. More than thirty years later, the Pope's visionary call was echoed by the Second Vatican Council.[2] Over the next three decades, several post-conciliar documents and many groups and individuals joined the chorus beseeching the Church to become a more effective communicator. The most significant documents were *Communio et Progressio*, issued in 1971 as a follow-up to the Second Vatican Council,[3] and *Aetatis Novae*, a pastoral instruction published in 1992.[4]

To this day, Catholics the world over have engaged in communications projects in an almost infinite variety of forms. At the same time, a handful of Catholic writers, educators, and communicators have attempted to offer prescriptions for the management, practice, and evaluation of Catholic social communications. In 1991, for instance, Pierre Babin, OMI, a French priest and religious educator, published *The New Era in Religious Communication*, in which he described what, in his opinion, would make Church communications in the electronic era both effective and inherently Catholic.[5]

Nonetheless, there is a widespread feeling that the practice of Christian communications has not lived up to expectations. The Church, as hard as it has tried, does not seem to have found a way to live up to Pope Pius XI's exhortation.

One possible reason for this is that Christian communications is not, to this moment, overtly rooted in theology. Indeed, several authors, including an increasing number of non-Catholics, have tried to provide a rationale for Christian communications and place it within the context of other aspects of Christian theology and practice. Still, despite decades of effort, the Church does not have a commonly accepted theology of communications, one of

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[2] The Second Vatican Council issued *Inter mirifica*, a Decree on the Means of Social Communication, on December 4, 1963. An Apostolic Letter, *In fructibus multis*, subsequently established the Pontifical Council for Social Communications on April 2, 1964.

[3] *Communio et Progressio*, a Pastoral Instruction for the Application of the Decree of the Second Vatican Council on the Means of Social Communication, written "by order of the Second Vatican Council", was issued by the Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication on May 23, 1971.

[4] *Aetatis Novae* (Dawn of a New Era), a pastoral instruction written to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*, was issued by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications on February 22, 1992.

[5] Pierre Babin, OMI, *The New Era in Religious Communication*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1991).

its principal and most ubiquitous activities. Certainly, communications has never been placed firmly within the context of Catholic ecclesiology.

As a result, Christian communications is not taken seriously by most people both inside and outside the Church and is often practiced poorly: unprofessionally, expensively, and ineffectually.

This thesis, therefore, contends that the Church does need a broadly inclusive and widely accepted theology of Christian communications, and it proposes a dynamic, experience-based, and spirit-filled approach towards developing and maintaining such a theology. The thesis attempts to map out a path towards an authentic, living theology of Christian communications.

Although the thesis reflects the writer's decidedly Catholic background, experience, and academic studies in the Western tradition of the Church, some of the sources, observations and conclusions may also be relevant to Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican traditions of Christianity. For the sake of convenience, however, references to the Church are taken to mean the Catholic Church, rather than the Christian Church in its entirety, unless otherwise specifically noted.

Three assumptions permeate this thesis and are addressed both implicitly and directly throughout the document.

◊ Models and theories of communications developed for corporate, governmental, and nonprofit organizations are often not directly applicable to the Church, which is an entity unlike any other.

◊ For a variety of reasons, various papal documents pertaining to communications do not fully reflect the spirit and intent of the Second Vatican Council.

◊ Previous attempts at formulating a theological framework for Christian communications, most often based directly on Trinitarian and Christological theologies, tend to be incomplete and remote from everyday life.

The body of the thesis is divided into six chapters.

A. First, the thesis describes the Church's communications activity, illustrates the nature of its theological problem, and cites several attempts to address the problem.

B. Second, the thesis suggests that communion ecclesiology is an appropriate starting point for an authentic and realistic solution.

C. Third, the thesis shows how the theological method of Bernard Lonergan can be used to construct a framework for Christian communications theology that is founded on communion ecclesiology.

D. Fourth, the thesis illustrates how a framework for Christian communications theology thus developed is in harmony with the lived ecclesiology of the contemporary

Church, with the salient communications theories of Marshall McLuhan and Pierre Babin, and with the social communications advocacy of the Catholic magisterium.

E. Fifth, the thesis identifies a number of distinct characteristics of Christian communications that would emerge within the proposed theological framework.

F. And, sixth, the thesis concludes with some potential long-term ramifications of this approach for the Church and society as a whole.

Overall, this thesis portrays Christian Communications as

◊ a necessary ingredient of Christian **theology**

◊ emanating from and fostering **community**

◊ the sharing of theological **meaning**

◊ occurring in a particular historical and cultural **context**

◊ drawing "data" from **history and**, re-entering history, changing it

◊ being inspired by **love** brought about by individual **conversion**.

Specifically, the thesis builds its argument as follows:

◊ Although Christian communications is ubiquitous, it does not have a commonly accepted, broadly inclusive, theology. As a result, Christian communications is, for the most part, practiced poorly and not taken seriously.[6]

◊ Since any authentic communications model must emerge from, reflect and, conversely, shape the person, organization. institution, or community from which it originates, a reasonable positioning for a theology of Christian communications is within the theological discipline of ecclesiology. Further, the most compelling ecclesiology is communion ecclesiology, which was put forward by the Second Vatican Council and which, by its very nature, demands communication.

◊ Therefore, a method needs to be found for continued development of communications theology under the umbrella of communion ecclesiology and that method is one of experimentation and reflection, in which all theological enquiry culminates in communication.

◊ Developing and continuously updating communications within such a dynamic, living framework would help bring Christian communications into the contemporary world by linking it to the continuing evolution of other branches of theology and of communications theory. At the same time, providing this dynamic framework for Christian communications theology would both recognize the unique character of the Church and support the social communications advocacy of Vatican II, the Pope, and the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

◊ With its theology thus situated and developed, Christian communications would acquire certain distinct characteristics and would have several ramifications for the Church and society.

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[6] Regional presentations at the founding congress in November 2001 in Rome of SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication showed notable exceptions to this claim in parts of Africa, South America and Asia. And, of course, the dearth of Christian communications theology is not the only influence on how Christian communications is practiced and perceived.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND THEOLOGY

This chapter outlines the Church's communications activity, argues that there is no commonly accepted theological framework for practicing or understanding this activity, and enumerates some of the problems created by this situation.

1. CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS IS UBIQUITOUS

a. Scope and positioning

Communications is one of the most pervasive activities of the Church. It is at the center of Christian life, sharing this privileged position with worship and, perhaps, social services such as education and health care.[7] Avery Dulles goes so far as to say, "Communications is at the heart of what the Church is all about."[8] In fact, it may be only a slight oversimplification to say that to be a Christian is to worship, to serve, and to communicate.

Yet, as common and important as it is, communications is arguably the least studied, least understood, and most poorly coordinated and managed of all Church activities (Personnel management and administration may be worse.) The subject of communications is rarely seen in pastoral and theological books, journals, and Christian academic curricula, and is barely mentioned in Catholic canon law.[9]

So, theologically speaking, what *is* communications in the context of the Church? Why do we do it? Who does it: who speaks, and who listens? And where does it belong in Catholic, and more broadly, Christian, theology? Where does it fit among all the things that Christians believe, in the way they are organized, and how they relate to each other and

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[7] Admittedly, each of these activities also entails communications. The definition of communications is addressed on the next page and in Appendix 1.

[8] Avery Dulles, "The Church is Communications," in *IDOC International (North American Edition)*, 27 (June 12, 1971), p. 69.

[9] Prior to the promulgation of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* there was no Church law on the general subject of social communications. The previous *Code*, promulgated in 1917, dealt only with censorship and prohibition of books and other printed materials. The 1983 Code deals explicitly and exclusively with social communions in only one brief instance (Canon 822) In three other instances it deals explicitly but not exclusively with social communications; in nine instances, with sub-topics of social communications, and in two instances with subjects (catechetics and marriage) only tangentially related to social communications All the canons, with one minor exception, are in the section on "The Teaching Office of the Church", Book III of the Code.

others? Does communications have, or should it have, a theological discipline of its own, or is it a subset of one or more of the existing disciplines? If the latter, to which theological discipline does communications belong, and how is it related to other disciplines?

b. Definitions

It becomes evident later in this document that terminology and definitions are crucial to a reasoned analysis and understanding of this subject.

Generally speaking, that which was referred to as "social communications" by the Second Vatican Council,[10] in this document is referred to as "Christian communications."[11]

Concretely, the term "Christian communications" is taken to mean a broad range of activities by which aspects of the Christian faith are communicated publicly by members of the Church both among themselves and with others. As such, Christian communications is understood to be concerned with the public transmittal and exchange of explicit and implicit theological meaning, and not include:

1. one-on-one *interpersonal communications*, such as between priest and penitent

2. *catechetical teaching*, in the classroom or in other venues

3. *technical infrastructures*, such as telecommunications systems and computer networks, or

4. *administrative communications*, such as the exchange of letters and memos, faxes, e-mails, and telephone calls.

However, "Christian communications" is defined somewhat more broadly than the term "social communications" created by Vatican II.[12] The council defined it as "those means of communication which of their nature can reach and influence not merely single individuals but the very masses and even the whole of human society. These are the press, the cinema, radio, television, and others of like nature."[13]

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[10] It is probable that the word "social" was added as a prefix to "communications" in order to create a category of activity that excludes "technical", "administrative", and "interpersonal" communications but is broader than the term "mass media" that was in general use at the time. However, these distinctions are not as clear and significant today as they were some forty years ago.

[11] The term "social" is redundant since communications is social by definition – the act of communication *de facto* involves more than one person. On the other hand, Christian communications is qualitatively distinct from other modes of communications, a contention that will be argued as a central tenet of this thesis.

[12] This was the first time in history of the Church that an ecumenical council discussed communications and issued an official document on the subject.

[13] *Inter mirifica, Decree on the Means of Social Communications*, (Vatican: December 4, 1963), para. 1.

Excluded from the council's definition but included in "Christian communications," for reasons that gradually become apparent, is a range of other multi-person communication activities such as homiletics, church architecture and interior design, plastic and performing arts, parish bulletins and bulletin boards, and various audio, visual, and multimedia systems including microphones, speakers and projection screens used in churches and elsewhere.[14]

These are but a few examples of a nearly infinite number of instances in which Christians and, often inadvertently, non-Christians communicate God's Word.[15] Consequently, an inventory of Christian communications cannot be a tidy and comprehensive list. Indeed, the inventory is as complex, dynamic and, perhaps, mysterious as the Church itself. Appendix 1 to this thesis attempts to delineate, in summary form, how, when, and by whom Christian communications is practised.

The uncharted ubiquity of Christian communications raises many questions. Where in all the communications activity, for instance, is there any overt or covert theological meaning? Can one spot it? Can one identify and measure it? Can the Church make it happen or does it happen on its own? Most importantly, for our purposes, is the question of what drives all the activity? What theology, if any, justifies it or supports it or causes it to happen?

2. CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS DOES NOT HAVE A THEOLOGY

It would appear to be a truism that everything in and pertaining to the Church is based on an understanding of the existence and will of God, on theology. Christian communications seems to be the exception. There does not seem to be a broadly inclusive and widely accepted theological basis for all the activity that is defined as Christian communications.

If this thesis were an attempt to articulate such a theology, it could take stock of Christian communications around the world, now and in the past, apply to this a number of agreed-upon theological precepts, and, weighing them against the teachings of the magisterium, come up with a number of specific theological notions. However, the thesis is *not* attempting to articulate a theology of Christian communications. Rather, it is attempting to suggest a means, a process, by which such a theology can be developed and, over time, re-examined and refined as new revelations, experiences, and understandings come to light. In

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[14] These other Christian communication activities are also not mentioned in follow-up documents to *Inter mirifica*: *Communio et progressio* (1971) and *Aetatis Novae* (1992).

[15] Examples include strong Christian themes in such films as *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Road to Perdition*.

short, this is an attempt to construct a conceptual framework within which Christian communications theology can take place.

a. Constructing the framework

Ever since the popularization of the concept of relativism and, in the field of communications, since the early writings of Marshall McLuhan, demarcation lines have blurred among communications *form*, *content*, and *media*. No longer are these seen as distinct entities isolated from each other and having no effect on one another. Rather they, along with the *communicator* and the *audience* (which we will call *participants*),[16] are seen as being dynamic, interdependent parts of an organic whole.

Therefore, in the field of Christian communications, due and careful consideration must be given to each and all of these -- form, content, media, and participants -- in order to establish a realistic, practical, historically based, broadly inclusive and widely accepted theology of communications. In other words, the *content* of Christian communications, the major *forms* of communication currently being used by the Church, the identity of major *participants*, and the *media* they are using are the *necessary* groundwork for an authentic and living theology of Christian communications.

Evidently, unlike most other attempts at proceeding towards a theology of Christian communications, this thesis proposes a process that first proceeds upwards from experience, not downwards from doctrine or concept. It proposes that the theological groundwork is that which *is* in the field of Christian Communications, not that which *should be* or *might be*.

Solid theological foundations can be built on this groundwork of existential reality, on that which *is*, by taking advantage of the timeless and collective wisdom that is available in the Church and academe. The raw material to be extracted from this ecclesial and academic wisdom is a fusion of existing theology with communications theory.

The third stage of the construction process, and the central point of this thesis, is the building of an actual framework within which theologizing about Christian communications can take place.

The theologizing itself -- the fourth and final stage of the process -- can be either broad or narrow. It can encompass all of Christian communications or it can focus only on parts of it, such as on specific forms, content, media or participants.

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[16] In these days of communications interactivity, even the distinction between communicator and audience or recipient is often seen as being artificial.

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│  Stages of Construction¹⁷                                         │
│                                                                   │
│                        4. Theology                                │
│           All Christian communications or parts of it             │
│                                                                   │
│                              ʌ                                    │
│                                                                   │
│                       3. Framework                                │
│     Broadly inclusive and widely accepted place for theology to   │
│                            happen                                 │
│                                                                   │
│                              ʌ                                    │
│                                                                   │
│                      2. Foundations                               │
│         Existing theology and communications theory               │
│                                                                   │
│                              ʌ                                    │
│                                                                   │
│                      1. Groundwork                                │
│     Communications activity: form, content, media and participants│
│                                                                   │
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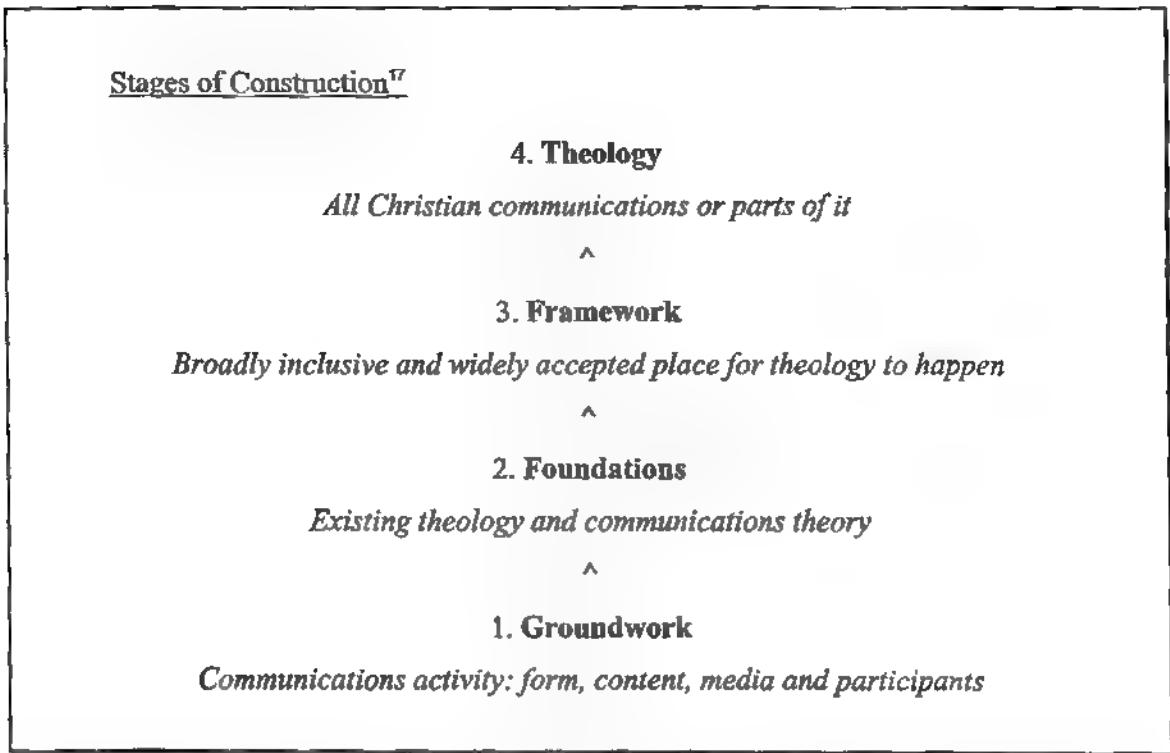
Constructed this way, the proposed framework would go a long way towards enabling the emergence of an ongoing, living Christian communications theology that is inextricably tied to the historical pilgrimage of the Church, to the teachings of its magisterium, to the revelation of the Scriptures and, directly or indirectly, to all other branches of Christian theology.

b. Attempts and approaches

The proposed approach is different from most other approaches and attempts to articulate a theology of Christian communications largely because it casts a wide net in order to be as comprehensive as possible. In fact, and this is possibly a harsh criticism, most existing theological work in this field seems devoid of methodology, of a systematic theological approach. Consequently, almost all existing attempts at articulating a theology of Christian communications are stand-alone statements disconnected from other such attempts, even by the same author.

Attempts to develop a theology of Christian communications in recent years have

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[17] For the sake of simplicity, this diagram is linear and unidirectional, proceeding from the bottom up. In fact, it could – and probably should – be circular, especially if it were to adhere strictly to the theological method proposed later in this thesis

generally fallen into two broad categories – Trinitarian and Christological. Some have argued that the theology of Christian communications should be rooted in the Trinity, since the Trinity itself is an act of communication among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[18] Others have argued that Christian communications stems from Christology; that since Christ is Word, a communication from God to humanity, Christian communication is an extension, an actualization of the Incarnation.[19]

It is not the intent of this thesis to discuss, analyze or compare these theological approaches nor even to determine whether they are, indeed, exhaustive.[20] The point is, however, that many if not most existing theological attempts on this subject tend to be so broad and so abstract as to be of extremely limited use. They hover like angels at a considerable distance above day-to-day reality.

What is needed, and missing, is an intermediate level of theology, one that is both systematic and pastoral. The need is for an authentic and practical framework that fills the gap between these "high," dogmatic theologies, and the many plans, programs, and individual activities that constitute the actual practice of Christian communications today.

Most authors on the subject of Christian communications sidestep the issue of a theological framework altogether; others pay merely scant attention to it. Following are a few examples of prominent writers in the field of Christian communications – both Catholic and Protestant – whose work serves to illustrate the point. Admittedly, the cited remarks that follow are not in context and do not represent the fullness of thought of each author, but they do help illustrate the absence of a systematic and comprehensive approach.

i. James F. Engel

One example, is provided by James F. Engel, retired Chair of the Communications Department at the Wheaton Graduate School and a prolific author of books and articles both on communications and on Evangelical Christianity. He takes a totally pragmatic and implicitly secular approach to establishing a conceptual framework for Christian communications.

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[18] An example of a Trinitarian theology of communication: "Human communication in the Church mirrors the communication of the Trinity." *National Pastoral Plan for Church Communication*, (Washington: NCCB/USCC, Aug. 1997), p. 1.

[19] An example of a Christological theology of communications, "... reflection leads Church communicators to model more deeply their work on God's creating Word." *National Pastoral Plan*, p. 13.

[20] There are other, related theological approaches, such as "Theological reflection acknowledges that God alone is the creator, source and model of communication." *National Pastoral Plan*, p. 13.

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In fact, instead of a theological framework, he offers a list of "principles" by which Christian communications, in his opinion, ought to be guided:

◊ Goal-Oriented Communication is Imperative

◊ The Bible is the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice

◊ The Church is Both Medium and Message

◊ The Message Must be Adapted to a Sovereign Audience

◊ Becoming a Disciple is an Unending Process between God and Man

◊ Christian Communication Is a Cooperative Effort

◊ Disciplined Planning is the Obligation of the Church.[21]

Of course, from a Catholic perspective, each of his principles, but one, is open to challenge. His third principle is a cornerstone of Catholic ecclesiology.

The key to Engel's approach is the "sovereign audience." In this, he represents the extreme end of a spectrum of opinion that holds the demands of *one* of the *participants* in the communications process – the *audience* – in highest esteem. His approach can best be described as "market theology," a term that Engel himself would not strongly object to using. At risk of oversimplification, market theology's method can be summarized this way: 1) tell them what they want to see, read, or hear; 2) tell them nothing more and nothing less; and 3) let only the Bible, or select parts of it, limit the sovereignty of the consumers of the Christian message.

Engel's theologizing about communications, in the end, seems shallow. Perhaps this is largely because it stands alone, apart from other established branches of theology. It has no integral connection with such disciplines as ecclesiology, catechetics or missiology.

ii. Pierre Babin and Angela Ann Zukowski

In their latest collaborative effort, Pierre Babin and Angela Ann Zukowski, offer their readers a post-modern "kaleidoscope of our convictions."[22] This kaleidoscope contains phrases such as "new evangelization," "new marketplace of prolific information and communication," "mass marketing techniques," "eclipse of mystery," "planetary village," "audiovisual language," "figure and ground," "new media landscape," "new paradigms,"

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[21] James F Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communications: Theory and Practice*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1979), pp. 28-33.

[22] Pierre Babin and Angela Ann Zukowski, *The Gospel in Cyberspace. Nurturing faith in the Internet Age*, (Chicago. Loyola Press, 2002. p. vii.

"mediatic message," "awakening of interiority," and "commerce as a model of communication."

Similarly to James. F. Engel, Babin and Zukowski provocatively draw attention to the powerful influence of the *audience* on the public communications process. However, in stark contrast to Engel, they contend that the effect of the audience is, and ought to be, counterbalanced by other significant influences, such as the religious convictions of the communicator.

Unfortunately, for the purpose of this thesis, Babin and Zukowski do not offer a theological synthesis of their ideas. Each of the theological ideas and communications concepts they put forward has evident merit on its own. However, by scattering and intermingling the ideas and concepts throughout their text, the authors challenge the reader to synthesize their insights into a cohesive and intelligible whole, into a systematic theological framework. Perhaps Babin and Zukowski have intentionally avoided unifying or systematizing their views because they see their work as primarily stimulative and pastoral, advocating Christian communications without unduly explaining or justifying it.

iii. Robert A. White

Robert A. White, SJ, by training a sociologist and anthropologist, and for decades a prodigious writer in field of communications,[23] looks at Christian communications in its historical and socio-cultural context. "The Catholic Church is still searching for an effective form of religious communication attuned to the changes which have followed the Second Vatican Council," he says.[24]

Surveying the Church throughout its history to detect "in more systematic form" the manifestations of a new communications emerging in the contemporary Church, he observes certain "patterns", "traditions" or "models" according to which society – and within it, the Church – has, throughout the ages, communicated meaning. He surmises that the prevalent model today emerged from an ancient "ritual-communion" tradition. He further surmises that its common elements are "an open, intimate expression of personal religious experience and of affective prayer, an accepting, healing and integrating response from other members of a

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[23] Robert A. White, SJ, was Research Director at the now defunct, Jesuit Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture in London, and retired recently as Director of the degree-granting Centre for Interdisciplinary Study of Communications at the Gregorian University in Rome.

[24] Robert A. White, "Communications in the Church", in *Communications Media and Spirituality. No. 57*, (London The Way Publications, Autumn 1986), p. 24.

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group; a non-directive, 'animator' style of group leadership providing little content but encouraging expressive participation."

Thus far, White might seem to be contributing to an existentially based, broadly inclusive, and widely accepted theological framework for Christian communications. Unfortunately, though, White takes an enormous leap from these vast historical observations and extrapolations to the realm of practical, reality-based contemporary theology. He cites "the programming of evangelical fundamentalist television stars" and the "popular radio" model in Latin America and the Philippines," both of which have managed to attract enormous audiences, and arrives at a hard-to-grasp conclusion. He says that in the contemporary world "the most characteristic and appropriate expression of religious experience is symbolic language." Regrettably, he stops there, explaining how the symbolic language might be used, but attaching it to little communications theory or Christian theology. Consequently, White's conclusion, lacking context, does not provide the sought after theological framework for Christian communications.[25]

iv. John. E. O'Brien

John E. O'Brien, SJ[26] has not written expressly about the theology of Christian communications, but the theological method implied by his related writings and his actions can be summarized in four words: organized, institutional, centralized, and pragmatic.

O'Brien offers this five stage process for meeting the Christian communications mandate of Vatican II:[27]

◊ Stage 1: creation of a Pastoral Communications Centre (in each major region of a country)

◊ State 2: workshops on graphics, sound, photography, video, and the ways of telling stories in picture and sound (note the narrow choice of media)

◊ Stage 3: outreach to media professionals – writers, artists, performers, directors, and producers (the assumption being that Church communicators are not professionals)

◊ Stage 4a: creation of a Video Production Unit and/or a national newspaper of magazine

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[25] During an interview with Robert A. White in July 1999 it was difficult to uncover a specific theological underpinning for the Gregorian University's Centre for Interdisciplinary Study of Communications.

[26] Founder of the School of Communications Studies at Concordia University in Montreal and former Secretary for Social Communications at the Jesuit General Secretariat in Rome, John. E. O'Brien, SJ, is now in semi retirement and serves as a communications consultant and teacher at St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto.

[27] John E. O'Brien, "Communications in the Church," in *Communications Media and Spirituality, No. 57* (London: The Way Publications, Autumn 1986), pp. 59-65.

◊ Stage 4b: a new type of pastoral team – clerical, religious, and lay   with talents as writers, directors, and producers

◊ Stage 5: creation of a small policy team, each member holding an advanced degree in some area of communications.

O'Brien's approach dispenses with theological musings or frameworks. Rather, it just roles up its sleeves and gets right down to work: no theology, just action.

v. Paul A. Soukup

Paul A. Soukup, SJ sees "a significant link between theology and communications science"[28] and has written about Christian communications at least as far back as 1983.[29] Soukup has, in fact, attempted to formulate a theological framework for Christian communications. Similarly to White, he examines communications within its historical context, using a "cultural studies" model for his work, and attempts to come up with principles that might be applicable to Christian communications.

Using this method, in his early writing, Soukup tentatively concluded that Christian communications theology ought to be closely allied with "narrative theology" and "liberation theology," but that is as far as he went.[30] In his most recent work on the subject he left the task of theologizing on Christian communications to others, mainly to the work of Walter J. Ong, SJ. For his part, this esteemed scholar, in this regard, merely traces the parallel historical and social evolution of communications media and theology but makes no attempt to superimpose the latter on the former.[31] He does not propose a theological framework for Christian Communications because that is not within his realm of interest.

In other words, on the question of Christian communications theology, Soukup defers to Ong, but Ong is not interested.[32] Again, the result is no framework, no comprehensive systematic theology.

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[28] Paul A. Soukup, "Communication, Cultural Form and Theology", in *Communications Media and Spirituality, No. 57.* (London. The Way Publications, Autumn 1986), p. 77. Soukup has been a member of the Communications Department of Santa Clara University, a research associate of the former Jesuit-sponsored Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture in London, and has worked with the Communication Committee of the U.S. Catholic Conference.

[29] See, for example, Paul A. Soukup, *Theology and communication: an introduction and review of the literature.* (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 1983).

[30] Paul A. Soukup, "Communication, Cultural Form and Theology", in *Communications Media and* Spirituality, *No. 57,* (London: The Way Publications, Autumn 1986), pp. 85-86.

[31] Walter J. Ong, *Communications Media and the State of Theology in Media Culture and Catholicism,* edited by Paul A. Soukup, (Kansas City: Shed and Ward, 1996), pp. 3-20.

[32] The author of this thesis confirmed the fact of the latter's disinterest in the subject during a brief personal interview with Walter J Ong, SJ in October 2001.

vi. Others

Each of the authors mentioned thus far – both Catholic and Protestant – has alluded, implicitly or explicitly, to a necessary connection between theology and Christian communications. Yet none has forged a link between the two. The diverse and highly populated worlds of theology and of communications theory are rife with other examples, including these few:

◊ **Michael J. Balhoff**, in *Strategic Planning for Pastoral Ministry*, states that communications is an essential ingredient in any pastoral planning process, although he places it at the very end of the process, when all else is considered, said and done.[33]

◊ **Robert N. Gray**, in *Managing the Church*, argues merely that "continuing communication" is a necessary component of Church management.[34]

◊ **Franz-Josef Eilers**, in his otherwise admirably comprehensive compilation of official Catholic writings on Christian communications, a text he considers to have "a certain normative character and must be considered as the basic teaching of the Church in Social Communications," does not cite a single document written expressly on the subject of Christian communications theology.[35]

◊ **S. Robert Lichter, Daniel Amundson** and **Linda S. Lichter**, who bemoan the dearth and bias of media coverage of Catholics in the United States, offer no theological basis for their claims that the situation can or should be reversed.[36]

◊ **Dan Andriacco**, offers a variety of tips and tactics for media ministry, including "Spiritual Exercises for a Media Age" and an abundance of biblical quotations, but makes no attempt to link his package of prescriptions to any underlying theology.[37]

◊ **Victor Sunderaj**, editor of *Pastoral Planning for Social Communications*, offers a number of ways in which communications can be integrated into pastoral plans but offers no theological reason for this to be the case.[38]

◊ **The Pontifical Gregorian University's** Centre for Interdisciplinary Study of Communications, offers courses on the philosophy of communication, on the theology of film, and so on, but nothing at all on the theology of Christian communications.[39]

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[33] Michael J. Balhoff, *Strategic Planning for Pastoral Ministry*, (Washington: The Pastoral Press, 1992), p. 60.

[34] Robert N. Gray, Managing the Church: Business Administration, (Enid, Oklahoma,: Haymaker Press, 1976), p. 129.

[35] Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, *Church and Social Communication: Basic Documents*, (Manila:, Logos Publications, 1993), p5.

[36] Daniel Amundson, Linda S. Lichter and S. Robert Lichter, *Media Coverage of the Catholic Church*, (New Haven, CT: Knights of Columbus and Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, 1991).

[37] Dan Andriacco, *Screen Saved: Peril and Promise of Media in Ministry*, (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger, 2000), p 135.

[38] Victor Sunderaj, ed., *Pastoral Planning for Social Communication*, (Montreal: Paulines, 1998), p. 7.

[39] *Centro Interdisciplinare sulla Communicazione Sociale: Programma degli studi*, (Rome: 1998).

◊ **The Faculty of Institutional Social Communications** at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross offers courses on fundamental and moral theology but nothing on the theology of Christian communications.[40]

◊ **The Catholic Press Association of the United States** insists that every Catholic publication be guided by a clearly defined mission statement but makes no connection between that and any branch or aspect of theology.[41]

◊ **The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA** limits its theology of Christian communications to saying that the role of churches is "communicating the story that is the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ."[42]

◊ **Dan Danford** makes six theological statements about the need for Christian communications – notably pointing out the biblical reference to making disciples of all nations – but makes no attempt at tying the six statements together.[43]

◊ **The Archdiocese of San Francisco**, in a pamphlet titled *Your Communication Plan*, asks the reader to consider, "What is the purpose of your communication?" and "Why do you want to communicate?" but suggests no answers. It does say, however, that "personal faith or credal content can be 'languaged' in the mass media," citing several examples of "effective" words, such as *fulfillment, progressive, individual, and grace.*[44]

◊ **John J. Considine** urges a "market-oriented" approach to Christian communications, wherein "Church leaders first try to determine the spiritual, emotional, relational, etc. needs and wants" of the population they are attempting to serve. He says such an approach makes the communication more focused and clear but provides no theological basis for his claim.[45]

◊ **Mattias Sterner** and **Angela Ann Zukowski** take the same pragmatic approach, calling on the authority of various papal documents but, as may befit a pastoral document, offering no theological underpinning for proposed investments in hardware, software, and other expenses for a parish media center.[46]

◊ **Dave Pomeroy** proposes "a rationale for Christian involvement with mass media" and some "theological reflections," which he admits are "'theological popcorn' –

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[40] Pontifica Universita della Santa Croce: Guida accademica, (Rome: 1999)

[41] *Mission, Marketing & Management: Development Guide for Diocesan Newspapers*, (Rockville Centre, New York: Catholic Press Association, 1991), p. 18.

[42] *The Church and Media*, (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ, 1993), p. 9.

[43] Dan Danford, *Simple Handbook for Church Marketing*, (St. Joseph, MO: Viaticum, 1992), pp. 4-9.

[44] Your Communication Plan, (San Francisco: Archdiocese of San Francisco, undated), pp. 3, 6, 12-13.

[45] John J. Considine, *Marketing Your Church*, (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995), pp. 11-23.

[46] Mattias Sterner, OP and Angela Ann Zukowski, MHSH, *Designing a Parish Media Resource Centre*, (Dayton, OH: Center for Religious telecommunications, 1991).

little nuggets thrown up in the air, which you'll have to sort out for yourself in any systematic fashion."[47]

It would be possible to cite many other examples of the dearth of cohesive theological statements in published work on the subject of Christian communications. This section will conclude, however, by citing authors William F. Fore, a Methodist, and Patrick Granfield, a Catholic, whose works seem to be an exception to the rule. Their approaches are similar to each other, mutually supportive, and more comprehensive on this subject than the many authors surveyed.

vii. William F. Fore

A partly successful attempt at formulating a systematic, down-to-earth theological approach to Christian communications has been made by William F. Fore, a Methodist minister, educator, author and church leader.[48] In a book examining the mutual influence of television and religion, he sets out to construct a "theological framework for considering communication."[49] In it, he recognizes the value of a theological approach that "attempts to deal honestly and lucidly with the way things are."

In fact, he argues that a relevant theology of Christian communications must take into account the broader socio-cultural context within which it takes place: "Avery Dulles charges that 20th century theology has been largely a reaction against the corrosive influences of print culture on the faith of the Church." he says. "Dulles is right in insisting that the church 'cannot wall itself up in a cultural ghetto at a time when humanity as a whole is passing into the electronic age'."[50].

Fore begins by defining what he means by communications and underlining what he believes to be one of its critical attributes:

◊ "communication as a relationship which involves persons and things ... is the process in which relationships are established, maintained, modified, or terminated through the increase or reduction of meaning

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[47] Rev. Dave Pomeroy, *These are the Days of Miracle and Wonder: The Church, the Media and New Technologies*, (Dayton, OH: Center for Religious telecommunications, 1990), pp. 15-17.

[48] William F. Fore received a BD from Yale Divinity School and Ph.D. from Columbia University. A minister in the United Methodist Church, he was Executive Director of the Communication Commission of the National Council of Churches From 1989 to 1995 he was Visiting Lecturer in Communication and Cultural Studies at Yale Divinity School. His publications include *Image and Impact* (Friendship Press 1970), *Television and Religion: the Shaping of Faith, Values and Culture* (Augsburg 1987) and *Mythmakers: Gospel Culture and the Media* (Friendship Press 1990).

[49] William F. Fore, *Television and Religion: the Shaping of Faith, Values and Culture* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), pp 38-54.

[50] "Avery Dulles, "The Church and the Media," *Catholic Mind, 69/1256* (October 1971), pp. 6-16."

◊ "community is established and maintained by the relationships created by our communications."

To this, he adds what he believes are five "Christian doctrines, derived from the witness of Scripture, Christian tradition, and the reflection of Christians today, which bear directly on the role of communications in society. They are: creation and stewardship; sin and redemption; the newness of life; good news and proclamation; and Christian witness. He says:

◊ "Creation includes the techniques of social communication   the telephone, radio, television, movies, print, and so on ... all elements of social communication are first of all God's creation, and not our creation.

◊ "The communication media have become a major source of power and potential in the technological era. Because men and women depend upon them for information about their world, the media have become keys to many other forms of power: economic, social, and political. And precisely because of their intense concentration of power, they inevitably become a primary locus of sin. The primary manifestation of sin in the mass media is their treating persons as objects of manipulation and turning them into consumers of media rather than into participants through media.

◊ "God makes all things new. Novelty and creativity are essential elements of God's world ... Any policy or regulation which would restrict opportunities for persons to discover new meanings is theologically unsupportable (sic) ... Censorship of communication is itself a sin, since it allows one person or group to dominate the information intake of all others. Christian belief ... also rejects top-down, one-way flows of communication. It remains open, not only to novelty, but also to that which is not yet completely understood.

◊ "Christ came to set us free ... For Christians, a primary role of communication, therefore, is to aid in the process of liberation.

◊ "Christian doctrine challenges falsehood .. Christianity is not 'evenhanded.' It has a bias toward what it perceives to be real and true."

So, combining his definition of communication and its essential communal attribute with the list of what he believes are relevant Christian doctrines, Fore offers "some middle axioms for consideration. They are neither basic theological principles, nor specific proposals for action, but rather come between principle and practice – they are middle axioms."

Fore organizes these " middle axioms" under three major "aspects of Christian life":

◊ **Christianity as Communication**: "Christianity can be understood as a religion of communication. Johannes Heinrichs[51] and Avery Dulles,[52] among others, have proposed this ... theology must at all times take into account the meanings present in common human experience."

◊ **Revelation as Communication**: "How is the Christian faith authentically communicated? How does revelation, or knowing about God, take place? ... The task of Christian communicators is to reveal our internal history, and the internal history of our community, in such a way that it will help individuals ask what meaning life holds for them and their community and internal memory."

◊ **The Church as Communication:** "All of creation is potentially a mediator of divine disclosure, but the church is the community which possess the greatest potential for communication about God. According to Avery Dulles, 'The Church exists in order to bring men into communion with God and thereby to open them up to communication with each other.'[53] This task is variously called 'mission', 'evangelism,' or 'education'".

Fore's development of the three "middle axioms" fully supports the approach to development of Christian communications theology proposed by this thesis. His approach is, nonetheless, unsatisfactory, for at least three reasons:

◊ Fore first states his intent to base his theological propositions on observations of lived reality; then, in seeming contradiction, he draws on pre-existing doctrinal suppositions, never forming a link between the two.

◊ Fore's approach, by his own admission, is but a number of stabs in the dark; it lacks cohesion.

◊ For Catholics and others, the outright rejection of all instances of top-down, one-way flows of communication is problematic.

Fore modestly admits that his work is "not an attempt to provide in any sense a genuine systematic theology ... It proposes a worldview – a theological perspective – which I believe to be consistent with genuine biblical and historical Christianity, and which, if accepted by the reader, leads to certain implications about ways of using and thinking about communication."

Consequently, William F. Fore's contribution to the search for a broadly inclusive and widely accepted theological framework for Christian communications is certainly useful but he does not get as close to the heart of the matter as does Patrick Granfield.

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[51] "Johannes Heinrichs, "Theory of Practical Communication: A Christian Approach," *Media Development 27*, (1981), pp. 3-9 "

[52] "Dulles, 'The Church and the Media.'"

[53] "Dulles, 'The Church and the Media,' p. 6."

viii. Patrick Granfield

Patrick Granfield, synthesizing discussions at the "Cavalletti Seminar" in 1989,[54] arrives close to the target of providing a theological framework that lies somewhere between the "high" Trinitarian and Christological theologies and the down-to-earth lived reality of contemporary Christian communications practice. He says, "The theology of communication is related in a special way to the Church and to ecclesiology."[55] He thereby implicitly situates Christian communications theology as a subset of ecclesiology, with the caveat that "no one ecclesiology is adequate to express the fullness of the Church."[56]

Nonetheless, Granfield postulates ten specific ecclesiological issues and how they relate to communication, focusing, he says, primarily on the sender *(communicator)* and the receiver *(audience)* and on "the direction of communication flow."[57] These issues are:

i. **Imaging the Church** -- "In the New Testament alone there are nearly one hundred images of the Church.[58] The use of images are (sic) part of our search for the meaning of the Church."
    Communicative Dimension: "How is the Church perceived by its own members and by others? The manner in which we and others view the Church indicates the way we understand and practice communication."

ii. **Particularity and Catholicity** – "What is the relationship between the various local manifestations of the one Church?"
    Communicative Dimension: "Since the local churches share a bond of communion, there should be a dialogue between them. If there is communion, there must be communication."

iii. **Ministries in the Church** – "Ministries and charisms in the community called Church are necessary, legitimate, and visible gifts of the Holy Spirit."
    Communicative Dimension: "A variety of offices, tasks, roles, and ministries exist in the Church and are exercised by clerics, religious, and laity. All of them perform a communicative function."

iv. **Liturgical Worship** – "The liturgy is a vivid example of religious communication."
    Communicative Dimension: "The sacraments are special forms of communication,

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[54] Twenty five theologians and Catholic communicators met from September 24 to October 1, 1989 at Villa Cavalletti, south of Rome, to discuss ecclesiology and communication. Granfield compiled a book that examined the themes that had been discussed

[55] Patrick Granfield, "The Theology of the Church and Communication", *Communication, Culture and Theology*, (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1994), p. 4. Granfield is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Catholic University of America

[56] Granfield, "The Church and Communication", p. 5.

[57] Granfield, "The Church and Communication", pp. 6-17.

[58] These images are discussed by Paul S. Menear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1960).

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because they are acts of Christ and the Church, involve a personal encounter with Christ, and have a strong communitarian quality."

v. **Evangelization** – "The Church has a duty to communicate the core message of Christianity – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – to the world." *Communicative Dimension*: "'Faith comes from hearing' (Rom 10:17) and the communication of the faith takes several forms: the witness of an authentic Christian life, preaching, catechetics, and the utilization of the mass media."

vi. **Ecumenical Dialogue** – "Ecumenism is a communicative process among Christians seeking eventual reunion." *Communicative Dimension*: " ... Allow Christians to express what already unites them and to give a common witness to Christ. The use of media can be most beneficial to the cause of Christian unity, providing that inappropriate manipulatory proselytizing found in some of the televangelists is avoided."[59]

vii. **The Church and the World** – "The Church and the world are inextricably connected." *Communicative Dimension*: "Constant communication exists between the Church and the world."

viii. **Authority and Decision Making** – "A breakdown in communication often leads to a breakdown in communion. Failures in communication contributed to the Eastern Schism and to the Protestant Reformation." *Communicative Dimension*: "A cybernetic analysis of decision making in the Church emphasizes dialogue and participation and provides a helpful framework to examine the process of communication."

ix. **Collegiality and Primacy** – "It is important that the relationship between the Pope and the bishops be open, honest, and supportive." *Communicative Dimension*: The Pope and the bishops form a communications network. They communicate in several ways."

x. **Mass media** – "We live in a mass media culture which to some extent has turned the world into a 'global village'. The print and electronic media have a powerful impact on the Church, its faith, its community life, and its relations with the world. *Communicative Dimension*: "The mass media may present a fragmented view of the human person ... The imposition of a mass media culture may reduce the value of local churches and local ecclesiologies."

The strength of Granfield's approach is that he is, indeed, searching for a widely encompassing framework for Christian communications theology that can be linked in some manner to Catholic ecclesiology. His approach, unfortunately, also contains several limitations. For example, his definition of communications is not clear, his "issues" seem to

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[59] One wonders what it is that Catholic theologians have against Catholic and other Christian fundamentalists. Why do they so often go out of their way to put them down, even in a discussion of ecumenical dialogue?

be arranged randomly and need refinement,[60] and he has not chosen an ecclesiology with which to work.

Nonetheless, Granfield's work is valuable in that it moves forward the process of establishing a framework that identifies, unifies, and systematizes Christian communications theology, and links it to a branch of existing theology, namely ecclesiology.

Thus far, this thesis has argued the need for a theological framework for Christian communications and illustrated that no such framework seems to exist in the works of major authors on the subject. The next point to consider then is the effect of this void on the communications activity of the Church.

3. COMMUNICATIONS PRACTICED POORLY AND NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY

In general, the theological void in which Christian communications finds itself creates a bi-directional problem:

1. The higher, doctrinal theologies of the Church do not readily filter down to the rank-and-file practice of Christian communications. Therefore, people working in the field either: a) tend to be confused about what and how they are to communicate, and/or, b) go about their work without a tangible theological context, not fully aware of why they are communicating and, when pressed, coming up with seemingly ad hoc and random theological explanations of their work.[61]

2. Reflection on the huge mass of Christian communications activity around the world does not make its way up the ladder into the loftier, doctrinal work of Christian theology. Christian Communications makes little, if any, contribution to the evolution of the wider body of Christian theology. Unfortunately, therefore, the experiences gained from this most ubiquitous of activities in the 21st century has little or no effect on the progress we are making towards a better understanding and appreciation of God.

In short, under the current situation, doctrinal theology has little direct bearing on the practice of Christian communications and, conversely, the everyday practice of Christian communications exercises little, if any, effect on the formulation of doctrinal theology. The

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[60] The fourth issue, for instance, seems to be stated backwards. The ecclesiological issue would seem to be the role of sacraments and a communicative manifestation would be liturgy.

[61] The 1992 pastoral instruction, *Aetatis Novae*, recognized and attempted to address this problem. Its 1971 predecessor, *Communio et Progressio*, provided some theological background for social communications, for instance by identifying media as "gifts of God" that emanate from God's "giving of self in love" and "the central mystery of the eternal communion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit", and having the dual purpose of "cooperation in the divine work of creation and conservation" and "the unity and brotherhood of man". *Aetatis Novae* refined these notions, elaborated on their biblical and traditional roots, and then offered some practical suggestions for the pastoral practice of communications in and by the Church.

absence of a suitable theological framework within which such bi-directional influences *could* take place leads to the sort of confusion that is evident in the convoluted, circular logic of a much touted pastoral statement by the U.S. Catholic bishops:

> *"Church communication reflects systematically on its own communication by engaging in research and theological reflection."* [62]

Even in its proper context, that statement makes no sense. Christian communications needs theology that does makes sense, or it cannot function in a sensible, coherent manner.

Despite a massive, 40-year effort, Christian communications appears not to have grafted itself manifestly into the life of the Church. Other aspects of Vatican II renewal have thrived and flourished – liturgical reform, religious education, active participation of laity in parish life, social justice, youth ministry, ecumenism, collegiality of bishops, and so on. Yet, communications, where it does exist, continues to be treated as though it were on the periphery of Church life. [63]

No doubt, as alluded to earlier, one source of the problem is the definition of communications or, more precisely, its lack of definition. [64] One aspect of this is inconsistent use of terminology. Vatican II used the term *Social Communications*, [65] but several other terms have come into general use, such as *Pastoral Communications*, [66] *Church Communications*, [67] *Religious Communication*, [68] *Communication* [69], and *Catholic Communications and Catholic Media*. [70] Each of these terms has a different connotation, sometimes necessitated by cultural or other contexts but, nevertheless, tending to create misunderstanding and confusion.

A second aspect is that the scope of Christian communications is unclear. At various times, the term is ascribed different meanings and used to describe different kinds of activity – from intra-Church activities, such as the Catholic Press, to extra-Church activities such as

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[62] "National Pastoral Plan for Church Communication", *Origins*, Vol. 27: No. 7 (July 3, 1997), p. 116.

[63] Angela Ann Zukowski, MHSH, *Shifting The Paradigm: Perspectives on Diocesan Pastoral Communications Planning in the United States*. Unpublished manuscript, 1997.

[64] Granfield discusses this problem in "The Theology of the Church and Communication", pp. 2-4

[65] *Inter Mirifica* (December 1963).

[66] Zukowski, *Shifting The Paradigm*

[67] A term used by the conference of U.S. bishops and others.

[68] Babin in *The New Era in Religious Communication* and others.

[69] For example, Granfield, in "The Theology of the Church and Communication".

[70] Pope John Paul II speaking to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications in March 1993

the treatment of the Catholic Church by the secular media.[71] To make things worse, the several terms and meanings are often used interchangeably in the same context.[72] In addition, groups and documents that define Christian communications rarely include other parts of the Church, or the Church as a whole, in their definitions; the definitions are not all-encompassing.[73]

The resulting confusion is evident in the above-mentioned pastoral statement on Christian communications issued by the U.S. bishops.[74] Even the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* confuses the terminology and scope of Christian communications.[75]

This widespread confusion surrounding the definition of Christian communications – in its terminology and scope – both emerges from *and* contributes to the way in which communications is (mis)understood and practised. Since there is no generally accepted definition of Christian communications, Catholics around the world can, and do, engage in any number of activities that they identify as Christian communications. The activities are often sporadic, inconsistent, and isolated from each other and the universal Church. The individuals and groups who practice Christian communications have varying (sometimes positive, sometimes negative) relationships with the official Church and with each other. The result is that the communications emanating from these groups often lose some of their effectiveness or cancel each other out.

Even a general catalogue of the kinds of Christian communications activities practised around the world would be beyond the scope of this thesis. (An attempt at summarizing the subject matter, as mentioned earlier, is in Appendix 1.) In building the argument, however, it must be pointed out that in addition to an extremely broad range of activities that variously

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[71] The range of activities described as social communications includes: virtually everything anyone in the Church says or does — homilies, religious paintings, church architecture, visiting the sick, caring for needy, and so on; church marketing, public relations; internal communications, including the Catholic press; mass communications (radio, television, magazines, etc.) with some allusion to "computer based" media (everything today is computer based); church relations with secular media; telecommunications (computer and fax networks, satellites, etc.)

[72] For example in the various chapters of *The Church and Communication*, edited by Granfield.

[73] For example, the *National Pastoral Plan* portrays U.S. Catholic social communications as existing in a vacuum, with no relationship to the Church in other parts of the world, or to the Holy See.

[74] There is a confusion of parish, diocesan and national roles in the *National Pastoral Plan*, for example: "Although it is up to diocesan pastoral communications plans to spell out local goals, this national pastoral communication plan recognizes that it is in our parishes that the Church most directly communicates with her people, especially through God's word proclaimed in the liturgy and through a variety of educational programs." It then goes on to ignore the liturgy and educational programs and makes no mention of such other elements of Church communication as Church architecture, sacraments and sacramentals, the day-to day-behavior of clergy and parishioners, etc. It focuses, instead, on communications media.

[75] The index entry for Social Communications in the initial Doubleday softcover edition of the Catechism tells the reader to "See Media." The seven paragraphs that constitute the Media section (paras. 2493-99) say little more than that the media play an important role in society and offer a few moral guidelines for media practitioners. There are no definitions.

go by the name of Christian communications,[76] there are the communicative aspects of Church ministries such as liturgical planning, education, and church picnics. On top of that, there are the uncounted reports and portrayals of the Catholic faith and practice by non-Church media such as television, radio, film, publishing, drama, and music.

In short, probably in no time in history has so much been communicated by and about the Church and its beliefs. Therefore, the practice of Christian communications, in its broadest sense, is a multi-million-dollar, international industry directly and indirectly employing thousands of people around the globe. However, it is an industry with no generally accepted rules, no overarching plans to govern its steady flood of activity, no criteria to measure its efficiency or effectiveness, and no theology. [77]

Despite its magnitude, the mass of Christian communications activity goes largely unnoticed, is not taken seriously by the Church or the world at large, and, consequently, is generally limited in its impact. In contrast, the focused efforts of the Church's secular adversaries in this Age of Information are winning individual hearts and public attention.

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[76] A few examples:

♦ The massive and ever expanding EWTN monolith includes cable TV networks on several continents, short-wave and Internet service, printing and publishing operations and production studios. Other large radio and television networks include RSF (Radios Chretiennes en France), a network of 42 diocesan radio stations, and similar networks in Latin America, particularly Brazil, and Asia, notably Radio Veritas in the Philippines.

♦ Across the world, there are thousands of diocesan and national newspapers, magazines, and television and radio programs.

♦ Public relations and communications offices, in a variety of forms and sizes, are gradually becoming more common. Most serve parishes, dioceses, religious communities, schools, hospitals and other organizations The U.S. Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the U.S. Conference of Major Superiors of Men recently established a joint Public Relations Task Force and hired a Director to implement public relations strategies. Another example is the Secretariat for Social Communications for the Society of Jesus (Jescom). Its Executive Secretary says there are 400 Jesuits around the world specializing in communications.

♦ There are several post-secondary educational institutions and programs, such as the Facolta di Comunicazione Sociale Istituzionale in Rome, which trains priests and religious in the theory and practice of what is known as organizational or corporate communications and operates under the prelature of Opus Dei Other educational institutions are the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives at the University of Dayton, Ohio; Avex Alliance in Lyons, France; the Institute for Interdisciplinary Study of Communication at St. Paul's University in Ottawa, Canada; the Centre for Interdisciplinary Study of Communications at the Gregorian University in Rome; and several other institutions in other parts of the world.

♦ Media organizations include SIGNIS (Catholic radio, TV and film), USIP (International Catholic Press Union), WACC (World Association for Christian Communication -ecumenical), and (U.S.) National Association of Catechetical Media Professionals.

♦ A sophisticated website is operated by the Vatican and thousands of smaller web sites are operated by parishes, schools, dioceses, service organizations and other Catholic groups around the world. The Vatican site was put into service on March 30, 1997.

♦ Private and Church-run organizations produce and sell books, calendars, audiotapes, videotapes and CDs on subjects as diverse as prayer, beatitudes, clergy abuse, sacraments and Church history.

♦ Academic, theological and special-interest journals, conferences and discussion groups are too numerous to quantify. Discussion groups have emerged on the Internet on subjects as diverse as campus ministry, catechetics and homosexuality.

♦ Media literacy programs are offered in thousands of schools and parishes in North America, Europe and elsewhere.

♦ News services include CNS (Catholic News Service - international, U.S. based), CCN (Canadian Catholic News), UCAN (Union of Catholic Asian News, with 200 correspondents in 17 locations) and ACP (Associated Church Press - ecumenical).

▪ Training programs are organized for priests, bishops and other Church officials on how to handle media interviews. One such program, called *Encountering the Media*, is offered by Barry J. McLoughlin Associates in Ottawa, Canada.

♦ Numerous books, films and videos have been produced on the subject of communications. A recent example is *Imaging the Divine*, an analysis of how the image of Jesus Christ has been portrayed by the movie industry. Other publications include *Media Coverage of the Catholic Church, Television and Religion, Through Words and Images, Getting the Good News on the Evening News, Simple Handbook for Church Marketing, The Church and Media*, and *Mythmakers: Gospel, Culture and the Media*.

[77] To the author's knowledge, no comprehensive study has been conducted to ascertain the scope and magnitude of this industry.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND ECCLESIOLOGY

This chapter suggests an approach to rectifying the situation. It proposes a specific method of developing a theological framework for Christian communications. It does this by arguing that any theological framework for Christian communications must, first, reflect and be intimately tied to a theology of the Church -- in other words, to ecclesiology. The chapter then suggests that communion ecclesiology, in particular, is an appropriate starting point for developing the framework.

1. ASSUMPTIONS

Commonly accepted organizational communications theory[78] contains three basic assumptions, that:

◊ every organization, by its very nature, must communicate

◊ an organization's style of communication is derived from and contributes to its cultural uniqueness

◊ implicit or explicit in every style of communications is a specific theoretical communications model.

A corollary of these assumptions is that an organization's communications activities, to be efficient and effective, need to be understood and managed in a strategic and tactical manner. The argument is that communicating without a theoretical base is like trying to build cathedrals, without architectural plans, on quicksand.

Developing Christian communications theory for the Church, then, would mean articulating the Church's cultural uniqueness (describing what makes it different from other organizations) and identifying a communications model that is most suitable for it. Put another way, Christian communications needs to be based on and related to Christian ecclesiology.[79] A problem occurs, however, in determining which ecclesiology is most suitable for Christian communications.

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[78] a.k.a. institutional, corporate or business communications theory.

[79] Zukowski et al in *The Church and Communication.*

One approach to establishing a link between Christian communications and ecclesiology is to list several models of Church and several models of communication and, then, to ask the question as to which respective models are best suited to each other. That is the approach taken in *The Church and Communication*, the only substantive book on the subject written to date.[80]

2. MODELS OF CHURCH

In *The Church and Communication*, the general editor, Patrick Granfield, lists ten ecclesiological issues that he believes must be taken into consideration in the development of an ecclesiology of Christian communications.[81] As stated earlier, he calls one issue "Imaging the Church."[82] He says that there are nearly one hundred images of the Church in the New Testament alone and argues that "the manner in which we and others view the Church indicates the way we understand and practice communication." He mentions several ecclesiological models of Church, but ends his analysis with the ambiguous and rather inconclusive statement that "communication theory and practice offers ecclesiology a rich opportunity to grasp more fully the mystery of the Church."[83]

Later in the book, Angela Ann Zukowski, the leading proponent of Catholic social Communications and arguably the foremost authority on its practice around the world, also establishes a link between ecclesiology and Christian communications.[84] She says that "Where we place ourselves regarding the Church will determine to a great extent the kind of communication we will judge to be most *apropos* for the proclamation of the gospel. Ecclesiology dictates one's approach to ministry, one's sense of authority and leadership within the Church."[85] She describes the five well-known models of Church postulated by theologian Avery Dulles[86] and mentions Leonardo Boff's liberation model and the "feminist

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[80] Referenced earlier. Published by Sheed and Ward in 1994.

[81] "The Theology of the Church and Communication", *The Church and Communication*, pp. 10-18.

[82] The other issues are: "Particularity and Catholicity"; "Ministries in the Church"; "Liturgical Worship"; "Evangelization, Ecumenical Dialogue"; "The Church in the World"; "Authority and Decision Making"; "Collegiality and Primacy"; and "Mass Media".

[83] *The Church and Communication*, p. 18.

[84] She is founder and current head of the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives at the University of Dayton and the last international President of UNDA, a predecessor of SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communications.

[85] "Evangelization and Communication", *The Church and Communication*, pp. 169 ff. The five models are: hierarchical or institutional; herald, sacrament; communion; secular-dialogic.

[86] *The Church and Communication*, pp. 169-72. Avery Dulles first published his five models in *Models of the Church* in 1974.

ecclesial vision." Without speculating as to which of the various models and visions of Church would appear to have particular merit, Zukowski concludes that "Hierarchy must not be allowed to establish the model or pattern (for social communications). In place of a vertically linear model, we should think of a circular, interactive or triangular one ... there are alternative possibilities which emerge waiting to be disclosed and acted upon."

Although both Granfield and Zukowski do not state a preference for any of the ecclesiological models they discuss, their conclusions point in a common direction. Granfield calls for "a balanced ecclesiology (that) recognizes the multidimensional character of the Church" which may include an image of the Church as one of "communion, sacrament or People of God." Zukowski says, "The new ecclesiology calls for a new dialectical process which images the Church as a collaborator, networker, a Church in the round which encourages and supports an on-going transformation or birthing process for nurturing an authentic sense of *communio*."

In other words, Granfield and Zukowski point in the direction of the ecclesiology of communion.

3. MODELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Robert A. White, SJ, also writing in *The Church and Communication*, outlines five "normative traditions" of communications theory and practice. The last of these, and the one he favors, is the "Ritual Communion Normative Tradition."[87] He says this tradition is currently gaining "significant acceptance" and is "stimulating some of the most important current empirical theory and research."

White says that the Ritual Communion Normative Tradition is being developed both outside and inside the Church. Within the Church, he says, this tradition has evolved from Vatican II theology, particularly as expressed in *Communio et Progressio*, a follow-up document on social communications.[88] To define the tradition, he relies heavily on the work of Church historian James Carey who says, according to White, that this tradition draws people together into "rituals of communication" by which they eventually come to acquire shared beliefs and meaning.

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[87] *The Church and Communication*, pp. 21-38. The other four traditions are "Corporatist Tradition of Universal Human Law"; "Libertarian Tradition"; "Social Responsibility Tradition"; and "Critical and Liberating Tradition".

[88] *Communio et progressio*, 1971.

Although this is an interesting and, no doubt, valid theory for certain situations, it falls short of being all-encompassing for the myriad of activities that are currently identified in the Church as Christian communications. Carey says this "ritual view centers on the sacred ceremony which draws persons together in fellowship and community." That might encompass such communications activities as liturgical celebrations and participation in prayer groups, but it doesn't even remotely apply to such activities as publishing Catholic newspapers or trying to get good coverage for the Church in the secular media.

However, if the three authors quoted from *The Church and Communication* are in any way representative of the direction of the search for a theology of Christian communications, one would have to conclude that there is a general movement towards basing Christian communications on communion ecclesiology. In fact, another contributor to the book, theologian Klaus Kienzler, makes the point directly with his article, "The Church as Communion and Communication."[89] Unfortunately, though, the article uses "communion / communio" and "communication" interchangeably in several instances and, thus, weakens its case for an ecclesiological framework for Christian communications.

4. CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

As illustrated above, there seems almost to be a collective intuition among theologians who have studied the subject that key to developing a practical theology of Christian communications is communion ecclesiology. This intuition seems to be well founded since there is little doubt that communion ecclesiology is, indeed, the primary ecclesiological model by which the contemporary Church attempts to define itself.[90]

In fact, communion ecclesiology was one of the major theological concepts articulated by the Second Vatican Council. *Lumen gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and other Council documents sought to define the Church as a communion of people united to each other both through their common loving relationship with the triune God and through the universal Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, both expressed most profoundly in the Eucharist.

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[89] *The Church and Communication*, pp. 80-96.

[90] *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*, (Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1992), no. 3 "The concept of communion lies at the heart of the Church's self understanding."

Subsequently, communion ecclesiology has been identified as the "one basic ecclesiology"[91] and the most important teaching of the Second Vatican Council.[92] The largest of four major sections of a Working Paper for the Bishops' Synod for America, for example, was devoted to communion ecclesiology. It confirmed that communion ecclesiology is "the central and fundamental idea" expressed by Vatican II.[93] Even as far back as 1969, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said, "(The) ecclesiology of communion became the real core of Vatican II's teaching on the Church, the novel and at the same time original element in what the Council wanted to give us."[94] Not surprisingly, then, the pastoral statement on social communications published by the U.S. bishops said that one of the elements of a national communications strategy is "promoting reflection on a *communio* model for church communication."[95]

Basing a theology of Christian communications on communion ecclesiology would seem, therefore, to go a long way towards solving the Church's forty-year-old problem of how to understand and practise Christian communications, except for one thing: there is not a common understanding of what constitutes communion ecclesiology. It is a term that many people use, and each ascribe to it their own meaning.

Much of the reason for this is that references to communion ecclesiology are scattered throughout various Vatican II documents and that the Council itself did not attempt to define either the term or its practical applications. As a result, there is much room for interpretation.[96]

These questions thus arise: On which interpretation of communion ecclesiology should a framework for Christian communications be based? Is communion ecclesiology an ideal foundation for Christian communications, regardless how it is interpreted?

To explore these questions, this document examines several perspectives on communion ecclesiology.

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[91] *Origins*, (Dec 19, 1985), p. 448.

[92] *1985 Synod of Bishops, Final Report*, para. 2.C.1.

[93] *Instrumentum Laboris*, Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America, Nov. 16 - Dec. 12, 1997, Preface and paras. 29-49.

[94] Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1988), p 7.

[95] *National Plan*, Sect. 6.

[96] Richard P. McBrien in *Church: The Continuing Quest* refers to the various interpretations of the Council's intentions as "a study in ambivalence." He says, "The change in ecclesiological outlook has happened so abruptly that many Christians have not even begun to assimilate its meaning." p. 26.

5. PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

It would be presumptuous for this thesis to attempt a definition of communion ecclesiology or even to offer a speculative list of its various interpretations. However, to move along the overall argument of this thesis, it is necessary to distill communion ecclesiology into its dominant characteristics.

Thus, it is popularly argued, in the simplest possible terms, that communion ecclesiology can be viewed from either of two perspectives:

i. a perspective articulated by the concept of the Church as a **People of God** – with the assumption that the Church is made up of people who, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, have a direct relationship with God (via their hearts, consciences, personal grace, etc.) and a relationship through other people (in whom God resides);

ii. a perspective associated with the notion of the Church as the **Body of Christ** – with the assumption that, by the incarnation, God has been made known and continues to be made known to humanity though the Church established by Jesus Christ.

The first perspective is offered by such theologians as Michael G. Lawler and Thomas J. Shanahan.[97] The second view of often attributed to such personages as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.[98] In Western (mainly American) political parlance, the first perspective is often portrayed as "liberal" and the second as "conservative." In fact, neither of these terms is sufficiently descriptive, nor are the two perspectives mutually exclusive.

As will soon become evident, such dichotomizing of communion ecclesiology into a simple "either/or" is unnecessary and inaccurate.

6. AN INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

Ecclesiologist Dennis Doyle has analyzed a broad range of interpretations of communion ecclesiology by eminent theologians and Church officials such as Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Hans Kung, Joseph Ratzinger, and Pope Paul II.[99] As a result, he contends that the dichotomy identified above can be expanded at least into a trichotomy,

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[97] Michael G. Lawler and Thomas J Shanahan, *Church· A Spirited Communion.* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1995). Lawler is Professor of theology and Shanahan is Associate Professor at Creighton University.

[98] The views of Joseph Ratzinger on this subject have been in several of his writings on ecclesiology in the past three decades, including *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991.

[99] Dennis M. Doyle. *Communion Ecclesiology· Vision and Versions.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000).

which would begin to sidestep and, possibly, negate the false confrontation between "left" and "right."[100]

He portrays six currently dominant images of the Church:

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

<u>Images of Church</u>

Mystical Body of Christ	People of God
Bride of Christ	Pilgrim Church
Communion of Saints	Servant Church

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Cognizant that these six images pervade the rank and file of the Church, and the attitudes of many of its leaders, Doyle contends that, given certain conditions, there can be several, compatible versions of communion ecclesiology.[101] His analysis suggests that, to date, theologians have constructed at least six versions of communion ecclesiology:

a. "**CDF Version**, notable for its emphasis on the Church universal and the importance of certain visible church structures.

b. "**Rahnerian Version**, notable for its emphasis on the sacramentality of the world and on the communion with God that exists within all of mankind.

c. "**Balthasarian version**, notable for its emphasis on the uniqueness of Christian revelation and its aesthetic character.

d. "**Liberation version**, notable for its emphasis on the option for the poor and on the political implications of communion.

e. "**Contextual version**, notable for its emphasis on gender, ethnicity, and social location as the context for appreciating relationality.

f. "**Reforming version**, notable for its emphasis on the need for Roman Catholics to challenge radically their own ecclesiological presuppositions in the interest of ecumenical progress.

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[100] Mary A. Ehle suggests that Doyle's perspective of communion ecclesiology is, in fact, "right of center" and lacks "a sense of what the practice of this vision of communion ecclesiology will look like." *Theological Studies, 61* (March 2001). pp. 624-26

[101] Ehle says Doyle's attempt at inclusivity results in a ":less than dynamic concept of complementarity". His work is also critiqued in "Review Symposium on Dennis M. Doyle's *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions*", *Horizons, 29* (Fall 2002), pp. 326-43

Doyle says that each of these versions contains some part of the ecclesial vision of Vatican II, but not all of it. He cautions, "That is not to say that all are equal" or, conversely, "one version of communion ecclesiology has the corner on the market."

Thus, Doyle establishes the first of three "frameworks for inclusion" by which to evaluate whether any particular version of communion ecclesiology is representative of the true and complete spirit of Vatican II. He says that any given version of communion ecclesiology must recognize the potential authenticity of other versions. "If communion ecclesiology is the key to interpreting Vatican II, the reverse is also true: Vatican II holds the key to a proper understanding of communion ecclesiology ... The breadth of the Vatican II documents themselves does not permit a simplistic rejection of one (version) in favor of the other. The Council documents are complex and the road to synthesis will be many. A communion ecclesiology that at this point in history simply chooses one school of thought over all others would portray the Council's variegated portrayal of the Church as both the Body of Christ and as People of God, as Pilgrim on a journey and as the heavenly Church, and as a lay-centered, hierarchically structured institution and as the Communion of Saints."

The second framework of inclusion that Dennis Doyle says emerged during the course of his analysis is "the idea that to be 'Catholic' is to be 'inclusive' ... The Catholic impulse is to favor the "both/and' over the 'either/or.' It is to be open to truth wherever it may be found. It is to opt for unity, sometimes at the cost of other goods." In other words, Doyle believes that any version of communion ecclesiology that claims recognition must be open to the inclusion or, at least, the influence of other versions.

His third framework of inclusion concerns sacramentality: "Understanding the Church as a sacrament in a manner that draws upon Thomas Aquinas' distinction between two kinds of sacrament.[102]"

"There is a sacramentality that offers to the world that which the world lacks," Doyle says, "and there is a sense in which there is a sacramentality that blesses and enhances what the world, through God's grace, already has. Both of these meanings of sacramentality are grounded in the Catholic tradition ... A truly Catholic vision of communion ecclesiology must find a way to emphasize simultaneously both of these senses of sacramentality."[103]

Doyle then proceeds to lay out a method by which to sort through, evaluate and understand "various meanings of 'communion' as that term is actually used by contemporary

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[102] *Summa Theologiae*, part III, q. 84, a. 1."

[103] See also Pasquale Borgomeo, *L'Eglise de ce Temps: dans la predication de Saint Augustin.* (Paris. Etudes Augustiniennes, 1972).

theologians in current discussion."[104] Important in this evaluative task, he says, is sifting out "reductive distortions" of communion ecclesiology, which, if not corrected have the potential of emphasizing one characteristic of communion ecclesiology over all others.

He summarizes his method in a chart that lists five dimensions of communion ecclesiology – divine, mystical, sacramental, historical and social – along with potential distortions of each, and their suggested "corrective images."

Five Dimensions of Communion Ecclesiology

Reductive Distortion	Corrective Image	Dimension
individualism	Trinity	divine
the merely human	Body of Christ/ Communion of Saints	mystical
juridicism	Communion of communions	sacramental
mystification	People of God/ Pilgrim Church	historical
exclusivism	Leaven in the World	social

Finally, Doyle suggests five "touchstones" that, "taken together, can serve as a measure of the multi-dimensionality of any particular version of the vision (of Vatican II) ... (and) provide guidance for any articulation of communion ecclesiology that would claim the parentage of Vatican II:"

◊ **Divine** – "understanding the Church as an invitation to share in the divine life and love of the three persons in one God. Communion has necessarily a vertical dimension ... Communion is first of all with God."

◊ **Mystical** – "understanding the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and as the Communion of Saints ... The Church is not simply a mundane reality, but it includes dimensions that transcend this place and time."

◊ **Sacramental** – "understanding the Church as a sacrament ... The Eucharist and the episcopacy both function as essential structures that bring unity to the local church and forge connections with all the other local churches."

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[104] Doyle: "Komonchak explores how the word 'communio' has functioned in quite different ways in earlier Roman Catholic contexts, at times itself being used to express juridical concepts. See Joseph A. Komonchak, 'Conceptions of Communion, Past and Present,' *Cristianesimo nella storia* (1995) 321-40."

◊ **Historical** - "understanding the church as the pilgrim people of God on its journey through history. ... the Church represents the visible breaking in of the kingdom about which Jesus preached, and is the seed of that kingdom, present among us, not yet having attained its fullness."

◊ **Social** – "understanding the Church as a social body with a commitment to justice and to global relationality ... a leaven in the world.

Doyle makes the point that each of these touchstones has ecumenical implications, the sum of which requires constant reform, renewal, and dialogue on the part of the Church and may lead to greater Christian unity.[105]

So, thus understood, what would be the link between communion ecclesiology and Christian communications? Edmund Arens suggests an answer.[106]

7. COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY DEMANDS COMMUNICATION

"The church is a community of christopractical communication,"[107] says Edmund Arens.

Arens' argument is that what you *do* communicates who you *are*. In other words, praxis – the concrete actions taken by an individual, organizational or institutional entity – serve both to describe and define the reality of the individual, organization, or institution in question.[108] This is a reverse of the commonly held axiom that, simply put, who or what you are determines how and what you communicate. That the two viewpoints are not mutually exclusive is critical to the approach to the development of Christian communications theology proposed by this thesis.[109]

Arens draws his argument from the example of Jesus Christ: "The person and praxis of Jesus ... assume center stage. His communicative actions provide access to his person, and the type and manner of his praxis make clear the theological content of his action."[110] (This has a similar savor to Marshall McLuhan's axiom, "The Medium is Message," which is

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[105] John Fullenbach, referring to Doyle's definition of communion ecclesiology, says this ecclesiology is insufficient as a model of the Church and that its "inborn" weakness is that it encounters several dangers when it is "chosen consciously to offset a too hierarchically conceived church." *Church Community for the Kingdom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), pp. 147-52.

[106] Edmund Arens, *Christopraxis: a Theology of Action*, translated by John F. Hodffmeyer, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995.

[107] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 154.

[108] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 154.

[109] It will become evident in the next chapter of this thesis that Bernard Lonergan synthesizes the two approaches into a single theological method.

[110] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 5.

discussed later in this thesis along with Pierre Babin's interpretation of the axiom in the context of Christian communications.")

Although Arens operates on that "loftier" theological plane of Christology, his insights advance the central argument of this thesis by infusing Christology into post-Vatican II ecclesiology. In particular, Arens's ecclesiological insight constructs a bridge between communion ecclesiology and the theological method of Bernard Lonergan, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Arens bases his christo-ecclesiological views on the writings of Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action[111] "In his two-volume *Theory of Communicative Action*, Jurgen Habermas ... systematically develops studies of the theory of language and action that he has been conducting since the beginning of the 1970s. Habermas takes these studies and integrates them into a comprehensive theory of communicative action."[112]

Arens says that, in contemplating the philosophy and practical consequences of human praxis, Habermas first "distinguishes concepts of teleological, norm-regulated, dramaturgical and communicative action."[113] Arens, for his christo-ecclesiological project, focuses in on the fourth of these concepts: communicative action.

According to Habermas, says Arens, "Linguistic processes of reaching an understanding aim at an agreement. Agreement achieved by means of communication possesses a rational foundation insofar as it is based on acceptance of the offers made in speech acts – an acceptance that results in shared conviction."[114] Habermas is saying that action, in its communicative dimension, is the process by which a community, even the human community at large, arrives at a consensus as to what it understands to be truth. Commonly accepted notions of truth, in other words, arise out of the continuing and reciprocal dialog of a given community. This reasoning, as will soon become evident, parallels closely the underlying principles of the theological method proposed by Bernard Lonergan.

Edmund Arens ties Habermas's abstract philosophical thinking to ecclesiology and, thus, to Lonergan's theological method and the main argument of this thesis by saying, "The communicative theory of action is theologically relevant first of all insofar as it is engaged in

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[111] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 1.

[112] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 7.

[113] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 13.

[114] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 10.

a reconstruction of, and a reflection upon, the basic structures of human praxis."[115] Or, in other words, in Arens view, theology – and, in particular Christian communications theology – can begin with an observation of the trends and patterns of lived human experience.

Arens goes one step further. He argues that, "The communicative theory of action is of particular relevance for reflection at the level of fundamental theology. The communicative theory of action is constituted in an interdisciplinary manner and oriented in an interdisciplinary direction. It thus fits well with a fundamental theology that: 1) among the theological disciplines represents the place of institutionalized interdisciplinary work; and 2) has the task of engaging in the investigation of theological foundations in conversation and critical debate with other sciences and with philosophy."[116] If valid and true, this assertion carries Habermas's communicative theory of action in the direction of a foundational theological framework for Christian communications.

However, to arrive at this point, one needs to examine Arens's reason as to how human praxis might be considered by an ecclesiology seen from a Christological perspective

Arens asks, "Does Christian faith (and along with it, perhaps, the practice of Christian communications) represent a communicative praxis that should be the object of theological analysis and reflection?"[117]

He answers his own question, with a "yes," provided that we see the practiced life of the Christian community of faith as analogous to that of Jesus. "I understand his healings and exorcisms as communicative actions of Jesus."[118]

Arens explains: "Jesus' communicative action in relations to those persons and groups whom he encountered and with whom he lived during his activity in Galilee – needy seeking help, Pharisees opposing him and engaging in disputes with him, disciples and supporters, members of the rural population – is characterized by a common basic feature. His communicative praxis demonstrates a communicative orientation towards others.[119] It also brings to expression the communicative intention of the Jesus movement."[120] In other words

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[115] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 29.

[116] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 20.

[117] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 30.

[118] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 37

[119] Arens: "D. Bonhoeffer gives this basic feature a rich and concise formulation when he says that 'Jesus is there only for others,' (D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Pares from Prison*, 3rd ed., e. E. Bethge, R. Fuller, rev. Trans. F. Clark et al. [London: SCM, 1967], 209)."

[120] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 64.

Jesus' actions communicated as much to those around him as did his words. Such might also be true for the Church, particularly as concerns its communications activity.

Although Arens extracts his philosophical linguistic analysis of Christian action from the Sacred Scriptures, which he calls Christopraxis, he places his theories on the communicative effects of Christocentric action within the context of systematic theology. In fact, he places his analysis into the very thick of communion ecclesiology: "Today, talk of the church as community is everywhere. The church is characterized as a community of faith and of hope, as a community of tradition and interpretation, as a community of action and life, as a eucharistic community and as a conciliar community. The communion-ecclesiology is even characterized as 'the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents'."[121]

Then, recognizing the pivotal significance of communion ecclesiology in current systematic theology, Arens sets out to "assemble several ecclesiological and theological statements about the Church as community ... then articulate the characteristics of the church as a community of communication ... (and) sketch a christopractical understanding of the church as communio."[122]

He delves into a Christological interpretation of *Communio et Progressio*:[123] "This text reflects upon Christ in the context of *communio* and communication, calling Christ the 'Perfectus Communicator.'[124] On that basis 'Communio et Progressio' arrives at an ecclesiology that is communicative in its basic conception." [125] That is a radical statement, in effect claiming that communications is the *sine qua non* of communion ecclesiology.

He supports his contention regarding the Church as being essentially communication, with several examples. "The church is seen as a community of communication in various works that theologically take up and process Habermas's and (Karl-Otto) Apel's conception. Appealing especially to Habermas and (Helmut) Peukert, Barbara Kappenberg engages in reflections concerning the 'possible foundation of the church as a successful community of communication, or as the phenomenon of successful, ideal communication on the basis of the

[121] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 146.

[122] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 146.

[123] Published in 1971 as a follow-up to *Inter mirifica*.

[124] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 147. "'Communio et Progressio,' in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, rev Ed., (Boston: St. Paul's Editions, 1988), pp. 293-349, no. 11."

[125] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 147: "Cf. A Dulles, *The Church is Communication* (Rome. 1972); K. Kleinzer, 'Kommunikative Theologie nach dem Vatikanum II,' in CS 17 (1984). 277-87; J Meyer zu Schlohtern, 'Das Kirchenbild von Communio et Progresso' im Kontext der nachkonziliaren Ekklesiologie,' in CS 24 (1991). 303-19."

Judeo-Christian tradition.'[126] Hans-Joachim Hohn analyzes the church as 'the system of meaning of the proclamation of faith[127] a system that precedes and transcends individuals as well as the system of action of the praxis of faith, as that system arises out of the interactions of individuals.'"[128]

Arens comes closest to characterizing the Church that is seen as communion as, in fact, being a Church of communication with this statement: "We can regard the church as a community of communications in which, in their communicative action, various subjects, in their specific context and by means of appropriate texts and other media, hand on and receive specific contents, holding onto them, making them present, rendering them comprehensible, and creatively advancing them, all with regard to the goals of the subjects involved ... The church in its various forms goes about performing its task. These forms at the same time represent forms of the realization of the church as a community of communication."[129]

In summary, Arens says, "The questions asked by the theories of science and of action converge in a theory of communicative action, "[130] particularly as articulated by Jurgen Habermas. And from a Christological and ecclesiological perspective "The theological theory of action relates particularly to Habermas's communicative theory of action,"[131] establishing praxis as a starting point for "foundational theology."

By taking this position, Arens forms a bridge between the ecclesiology of communion and the theological method of Bernard Lonergan. He creates an imperative for a bi-directional movement from action (praxis) to communication of discovered truth and then back again to action. This parallels the pattern of the theological method proposed by Bernard Lonergan.

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[126] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 149: "B. Kappenberg, *Kommunikationtheorie und Kirsche* (Frankfurt am Main: 1981), 205-44"

[127] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 150: "H.J. Hohn. *Kirsche und Kommunikatives Handelen* (Frankfurt am Main: 1985), 156; cf. My review in *ThRv* 82 (1986): 214-216."

[128] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 149-50.

[129] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 150.

[130] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 30

[131] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 2

CHAPTER 4

LONERGAN'S *METHOD IN THEOLOGY* AS A PLACE TO START

This chapter argues that the theological method of Bernard Lonergan can be used to construct a framework for Christian communications theology that is founded on communion ecclesiology. The argument follows a four-step process:

- ◊ First, it explores authors who have attempted to link Lonergan's method to the development of a theology of Christian communications.

- ◊ Second, it examines the central portion of Lonergan's *Method in Theology* – his "eight functional specialties" – and its potential usefulness for constructing a theological framework for Christian communications.[132]

- ◊ Third, it focuses in on the last of the functional specialties, called "communications," to extract from it what may be useful for the task of this thesis.

- ◊ And, fourth, it synthesizes and draws conclusions from the first three steps.

1. MANY HAVE TRIED

At first glance, it might appear that Bernard Lonergan's thought offers little of use to what has been defined for this thesis as Christian communications. Inasmuch as he deals with communications at all, Lonergan does not draw a distinction between interpersonal, one-to-one communication, on one hand, and public communications on the other. He also speaks of communication generically, without specific regard as to whether the communication is in a religious or secular context.

That aside, one can, nonetheless, enquire into whether Bernard Lonergan's cognitional theory and epistemology are of any value to the theology and practice of Christian communications. One can do this by extrapolating applicable principles both from his direct and overt references to communications and from their underlying philosophical concepts.

Approached this way, Lonergan's cognitive theory and, to a lesser extent, his epistemology can offer some insights for developing an authentically Christian, and particularly Catholic, theology of communications. His in-depth analysis of the nature of insight and his proposed theological method provide a theoretical basis upon which a dynamic, living theology of Christian communications could be founded.

In fact, several attempts have already been made to explore how Lonergan's approach to theology, as well as his cognitive theories and epistemology, are applicable to the theology and practice of Catholic public (social) communications. These studies, while making worthwhile contributions to the field, fall short, however, when it comes preparing a groundwork for a theology of distinctively Christian communications. One notable attempt was made by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup, editors of *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age*, a work dedicated to Walter J. Ong, SJ, one of the pioneers of modern communications theory.[133]

As with most other anthologies, the Farrell/Soukup study is not exhaustive. It examines how Lonergan's ideas apply only to particular aspects of communications. These range from the extremely broad – such as the authenticity and intersubjectivity of writing – to the extremely narrow – such as the role of theological symbols in mediating cultural change.

In general, Farrell and Soukup's groundbreaking study underscores the point that Lonergan turns the common understanding of communications on its ear, that he redefines it as a common search for meaning, an essential ingredient of the universal human process of knowing, which is ultimately concerned with the understanding of being.

"Communication (according to Lonergan) is mainly a social value where laws, norms, and technical and political decisions take their stand," says Francisco Sierra-Gutierrez, one of thirteen contributors to the Farrell/Soukup study. Quoting Lonergan, he says, "'Through communication there is constituted community, and, conversely, community constitutes and

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[132] Lonergan's theological method has been criticized by such authors as Michael C. O'Callaghan in *Unity in Theology. Lonergan's Framework for Theology In Its New Context* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1980), pp. 485-90), Patrick Corcoran, SM, in *Looking at Lonergan's Method* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1975), pp. 164-66.); Timothy P Fallon, SJ and Philip Boo Riley in *Religion in Context Recent Studies* in Lonergan (Lanham, MD University Press, 1988), pp. 60-65.; Joseph A Komonchak in *"The Church*, The Desires of the Human Heart", *An Introduction to the Theology of Bernard Lonergan*, Vernon Gregson (ed) (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), pp 222-25; Hugo A. Meynell in *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 146-147 and in *The Theology of Bernard Lonergan* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), pp 28-46.; Craig S. Body, SJ in *The Road to Lonergan's Method in Theology· The Ordering of Theological Ideas* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1991), pp. 245-61.; James B Sauer, and Peter L. Monette and Christine Jamieson (eds.) in *A Commentary on Lonergan's Method in Theology* (Ottawa: The Lonergan Web Site, 2001), pp. 340-41.

[133] Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup, eds., *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age*. (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1993), p. 288.

perfects itself through communication."[134] The world today needs a golden rule that calls for dynamic public opinion and offers several mechanisms to promote participation, public argumentative discussions, and dialogical procedures in order to make decisions with a clear knowledge of effects and consequences they might have on potential interlocutors. Such a golden rule is needed for all institutions, social organizations, industries, states, and churches to follow in their internal and external relations. When we conceive of the good of order and its institutions as ongoing processes, we will readily see that communication entails policy making, planning, and the execution of the plans."[135]

Sierra-Gutierrez's interpretation of Lonergan's thought thus illustrates the potential lasting value to the unity, cohesiveness and effectiveness of the Church that would result from a dynamic, dialogical framework for Christian communications.

Another example of the study's usefulness to the task of this thesis is the previously mentioned article on the authenticity and intersubjectivity of writing, written by Thomas J. Farrell himself, especially if one substitutes the word "communicating" for the word "writing," and "communicator" for writer." The article analyzes the communicator's relationship to that which is being communicated. This has become a major concern of post-modern communications theory. Until Marshall McLuhan's work started to be taken seriously, the communicator, the message, and the recipient of the communication were seen as separate and distinct entities.

"Lonergan sees authentic meanings and values as emerging in the context of a community, although he is well aware that communities can be seriously inauthentic in certain respects," Farrell says. "Individual people appropriate the authentic meanings and values of the community inasmuch as they are members of the community, and their appropriation of the community's authentic meanings and values forms their subjectivity, which thereby constitutes their intersubjectivity:

> *(Lonergan) 'By a community is not meant a number of people with a frontier. Community means people with a common field of experience, with a common or at least complementary way of understanding people and things, with common judgments and aims ... and as it is community that hands on the discoveries and inventions of the past, and, as well, cooperates in the present, so it is community that is the carrier of power.'"* [136]

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[134] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 363.

[135] Farrell and Soukup, *Communication and Lonergan*, p. 288.

[136] Thomas J. Farrell, "Writing, the Writer and Lonergan", *Communication and Lonergan*, pp. 27-28.

Farrell says, "Lonergan suggests that there is more to achieving authority than balancing the 'sincere' self and the 'social self'."[137]

"In Lonergan's view," says Farrell, "Authority in writing (communications) comes not so much from balancing our private and public selves, as from the validity of the meanings and values expressed in the writing, which validity is recognized by the community because the meanings and values have been formulated, shared and established and verified intersubjectively." [138]

This concept of intersubjectivity echoes the tenets of communion ecclesiology and hints at an approach not only for establishing a theological framework for Christian communications but for the act of Christian communication itself: that it is a communitarian not a solitary process within which the individual draws value and meaning from the community and is then ultimately, at least in part, accountable to it.

Both Farrell and Sierra-Gutierrez thus have forged a link between the thinking of Bernard Lonergan and facets of communication. Their articles in the study are complemented by others on such topics as rhetoric and preaching. There is certainly value in each of the articles and in the anthology itself. However, that value is limited for the purposes of this thesis by several factors:

◊ There is no direct reference to Christian communications, or the other names, such as "social communication" by which it is known.

◊ Lonergan is treated primarily as a philosopher of, among others things, theology. He is usually not seen as a theologian, even though his philosophy does draw on theology and gives strong recognition to communications. Therefore, at best, the Farrell/Soukup's study is about Lonergan's philosophy – of knowing, theology and communication – but not about either theology or communications.[139]

◊ Despite its title, in most of the articles of the anthology, communication is an afterthought, especially to philosophy. An indication of this is the fact that communications is rarely stated as all or part of the thesis at the beginning of each article. It is most often tacked on to the end after the thesis (whenever there is one) has been argued.

◊ With a few exceptions, such as Farrell's above, the various authors make little effort to define Lonergan's highly abstract but key terms such as mediation, self-appropriation, mutual self-mediation, and intersubjectivity.

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[137] Farrell, "Writing, the Writer and Lonergan", *Communication and Lonergan*, p. 30.

[138] Farrell, "Writing, the Writer and Lonergan", *Communication and Lonergan*, p. 31.

[139] See, for example, ""From Logic to Rhetoric in Science", *Communication and Lonergan*, p. 31.

◊ The study does not address how communications, in a practical sense, is to be done, much less how Christian communications is to be done. That is left to the inferences of the reader.

◊ The study selectively ignores Lonergan's contention that what is perceived empirically also must be verified conceptually before it can be recognized as valid or authentic. In other words, its bias is towards Lonergan's first four, "bottom-up" functional specialties. (The same sort of selectivity occurs in many popular interpretations of the ecclesiology formulated by Vatican II.)

This thesis, too, is selective and has its own limitations, due primarily to the demands of limited space. The following two sections analyze only the portions of *Insight* and *Method in Theology* that pertain clearly and overtly to a potential theology of Christian communications.

2. LONERGAN'S METHOD APPLIED TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS
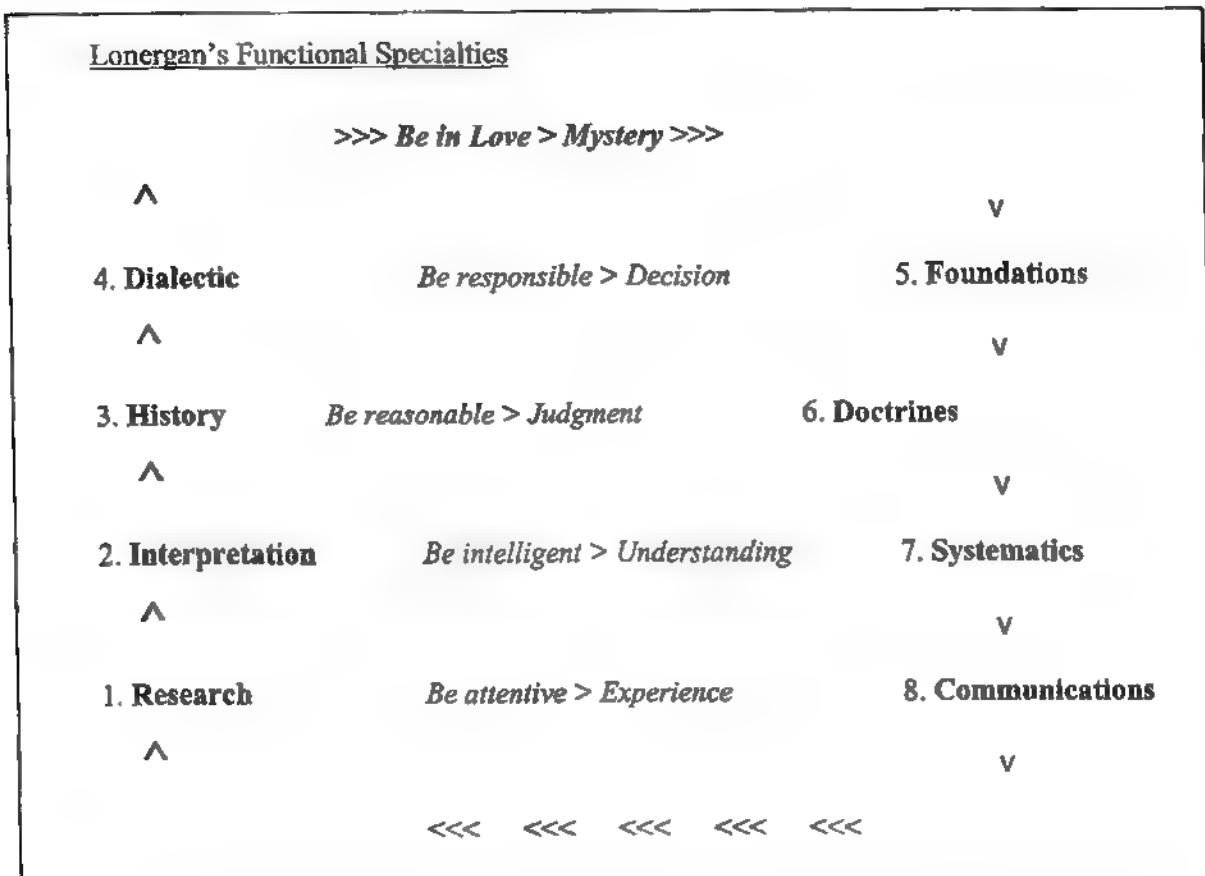
a. Functional Specialties

As a philosopher, Bernard Lonergan observed and reasoned that coming to know and understand something in an authentic manner involves eight distinct, though overlapping, functions of the human mind.[140] Though the functions are not and need not always be exercised precisely in the sequence in which he lists in them, he argues that the epistemological process begins with the collection of data (research), culminates in love (which is a mystery), and ends in communication. Each of the eight functions, furthermore, involves one of four cognitive acts: experience, understanding, judgment, and decision. Lonergan says these acts imply four pragmatic imperatives, which he summarizes as exhortations to be, successively, attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsive.

Lonergan applied this epistemological process to theology, and thus created his landmark *Method in Theology,* although he stressed that the method is applicable to other disciplines. As a result, others have applied it to a range of disciplines such as science, history, and education.[141] This section of the thesis begins to apply it to Christian communications.

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[140] Mark D. Morelli and Elizabeth A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, pp. 443-44.

[141] See, for example, David G. Creamer, *Guides for the Journey: John Macmurray, Bernard Lonergan, James Fowler.* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1996).

A simplified explanation of each of the functional specialties, and how they might be deployed in the development of a theology of Christian communication follows this chart. The chart summarizes the eight functional specialties, four cognitive acts, and four pragmatic imperatives in Lonergan's epistemological method.[142]

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

>>> *Be in Love > Mystery* >>>

∧   ∨

4. **Dialectic**   *Be responsible > Decision*   5. **Foundations**

∧   ∨

3. **History**   *Be reasonable > Judgment*   6. **Doctrines**

∧   ∨

2. **Interpretation**   *Be intelligent > Understanding*   7. **Systematics**

∧   ∨

1. **Research**   *Be attentive > Experience*   8. **Communications**

∧   ∨

<<<   <<<   <<<   <<<   <<<

An important feature of this epistemological process is its bi-directionality (up and down)and dialectic. The first phase (on the left of the diagram) is an upward movement from concrete experience to higher and higher levels of abstraction. At the movement's apex is love, a mystical and rapturous encounter with that which is becoming known.[143] This is reminiscent of the lyrics of a 1950s pop song, "To know you, is to love you."[144]

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[142] Chart adapted from David G. Creamer, *Guides for the Journey*.

[143] Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. 329.

[144] Written by Phil Spector.

The second phase (on the right) is a downward movement, from the abstract back down to the concrete.[145] At the end of this movement is a natural progression towards communicating what is known. It is *acting* on the knowledge one has acquired. As in the 1950s love song, " ... and I do."

The culmination of the process, communications, spurs a repetition of the cycle, since newly acquired knowledge becomes fresh grist for the mill of experience and enquiry.

Even though Lonergan assigns communications its own functional specialty, the method can be readily applied to the development of a theological framework for Christian communications. Each of the following eight sections of this thesis, therefore, briefly summarizes a functional specialty and illustrates how it might be applied to the development of such a framework.

b. Functional Specialty 1: Research

The first step towards the goal of acquiring understanding is research, the collection of raw data. Lonergan says the research can be "special" or "general".[146] "He says special research is concerned with assembling the data relevant to some particular question or problem," he says. General research is virtually everything else.

Starting with empirical research would be a unique and largely untried starting point for the development of a theological framework for Christian communications. This simple, almost self-evident procedural step alone would set the proposed method for developing a theology of Christian communications radically apart from most, if not all, previous attempts.

Virtually all other attempts at creating a theology of Christian communications have begun with an analysis of doctrine (Trinitarian, Christological, etc.), biblical accounts (Jesus as story teller, the use of parables, etc.), Church documents (*Inter mirifica* and its progeny, etc.), papal pronouncements (messages for World Communications Days, etc.), the work of theologians (Avery Dulles, Peter A. White, etc.), or secularly-based communication and organizational theories (paradigm shifts, Walter Ong, Colin Cherry, etc.).

Starting the process by examining what is actually happening in the field of Christian communications would, at a minimum, root the proposed theological framework in the lived and living experience of the Church. This empirical research could be into "special" areas, such as, for example, a comparison between the sustainability of Catholic television

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[145] Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. 492.

[146] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 127.

programs produced, on one hand, by "conservative" factions of the Church in North America, and, on the other, by "liberal" or "progressive" factions.

"General" research would gather information about, for instance, the growth in the number of Christian radio stations in various regions of the world, identifiably Christian presence on the Internet, the phenomenon of Christian pop music, and Christian themes (or lack thereof) in popular television programming.

There is little evidence that such data exists or attempts have been made to collect it except, perhaps, sporadically for publicity campaigns for World Youth Days, broadcasts of papal Masses, or other specific, isolated marketing purposes.

c. Functional Specialty 2: Interpretation

The second functional specialty, interpretation, is an attempt to understand the "meaning" of collected data. "It grasps that meaning in its proper historical context, in accordance with its proper mode and level of thought and expression, in the light of the circumstances and intention of the writer ... It is an enterprise replete with pitfalls and today it is further complicated by the importation of the problems of cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics," says Lonergan.[147]

For Christian communications, this interpretation would be doubly difficult, because there are few if any established measures, categories, or norms, for interpreting communications phenomena. Would it be valid, for example, to first collect data about the communications activities of two of the world's most prolific Catholic communicators, Pope John Paul II and Madonna, and then try compare their relative effects on: a) Catholics, b) other Christians, and c) non Christians? Putting aside the obvious difficulty of collecting the necessary data, one would be faced with mind-bending problems of interpretation, such as defining communications, effects, and even, what makes a person Catholic or a Catholic communicator.

d. Functional Specialty 3: History

Lonergan says that history is either basic, special, or general. He says, "History as a functional specialty in theology is concerned in different degrees and manners" with all three.[148]

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[147] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 127.

[148] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 128.

"Basic history," says Lonergan, "tells where (places, territories) and when (dates, periods) who (persons, peoples) did what (public life, external acts) to enjoy what successes, suffer what reverses, exert what influence."

Special histories, according to Lonergan, "tell of movements whether cultural (language, art literature, religion), institutional (family, mores, society, education, state, law, church, sect, economy, technology), or doctrinal (mathematics, natural science, human science, philosophy, history (sic), theology)."

"General history is perhaps just an ideal," he says. "It would be basic history illuminated and completed by the special histories."

As a functional specialty of theology, this third step must presuppose basic history, but, says Lonergan, "Its substantial concern is the doctrinal history of Christian theology and with its antecedents and conseqents in the cultural and institutional histories of the Christian religion and the Christian Churches and sects ... It cannot remain aloof from general history, for its is only within the full view that can be grasped the differences between the Christian churches and sects, the relations between different religions, and the sole of Christianity in world history."

The implications of this functional specialty for constructing a theology of Christian communications are profound and, some would say, revolutionary. For instance, one would have to place one's tentative observations developed in the previous functional specialty into the threefold historical context. That would mean, for instance, burrowing through the history of the church, perhaps even back into the historical aspects of the research and writing of the Scriptures, to trace possible antecedents for principles to be applied to contemporary Christian communications activity. No one to date appears even to have begun to search for the theological and doctrinal roots of the theological statements pertaining to Christian communications in *Inter mirifica*. The earliest document studied in this way appears to be *Vigilante Cura*, an encyclical written by Pope Pius XI in 1936.

Even to place tentative theological observations about Christian communications (second functional specialty) within the context of a "special history" would be a formidable challenge. What is the history, for instance, of the Church's theology on the use of written texts? An enquiry into that question would necessarily have to include a study of how and why the biblical canons were established, the underlying theology of the manual transcriptions of sacred texts in the early years of Christianity, and the theology behind the Church's complex reaction to the replication and distribution of the Bible after the invention of the printing press.

Added to that challenge would be the equally daunting challenges of contemporary historical study, "no less than hermeneutics, contemporary historical thought and criticism," according to Lonergan.

e. Functional Specialty 4: Dialectic

The fourth functional specialty, dialectic, has to do with the concrete, the dynamic, and the contradictory, and so it finds abundant materials in the history of the Christian movement,"[149] says Lonergan. However, the primary materials of dialectic in the work of theology, he says, are "the conflicts centering in Christian movements."

Equal in importance to the materials of dialectic, he says, are its aims. "As empirical science aims at a complete explanation of all phenomena, so dialectic aims at a comprehensive viewpoint ... from which it can proceed to an understanding of the character, the opposition, and the relations exhibited in Christian movements, their conflicting histories, and their conflicting interpretations."

While, in Lonergan's view, the aims of dialect are "high and distant," and the conflicts are manifested in "confessions of faith and learned works of apologists," he draws attention to the conflicts of the here and now. These, he says, are manifested "often in a more vital manner, in the unnoticed assumptions and oversights, in the predilections and aversions, in the quiet but determined decisions of scholars, writers, preachers, and the men and women in the pews."

He suggests these conflicting viewpoints can be studied in two ways: by comparison, and by critique. "Comparing them will bring to light just where differences are irreducible, where they are complementary and could be brought together within a larger whole, where finally they can be regarded as successive stages in a single process of development."

Such critique, he says, has value. "Christianity has nothing to lose from a purge of unsound reasons, of ad hoc explanations, of the stereotypes that body forth suspicions, resentments, hatreds, malice," he says.

Applied to Christian communications, this fourth functional specialty would examine past and present controversies and try to extract from them what may be commonalities, irreconcilable differences, and superfluous accusations. A case in point might be a comparison of, on one hand, the virulent protests against Mother Angelica's EWTN

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[149] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 128-30.

broadcast organization[150] and Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, with, on the other hand, the furor created by the censure by the Holy See of the works of Fathers Anthony de Mello[151] and Thissa Balasuria.[152]

In the first set of examples (EWTN and *The Passion*), controversy was generated by Christian communications phenomena commonly labeled as "conservative." The second set of controversies stemmed from sources labeled "progressive."

One wonders what lessons could be learned, what insights into a potential theology of Christian communications would come to light, if one were to compare these two sets of controversies point by point, to discover both that which they have in common and that which makes them distinct. Exercising the fourth functional specialty of Lonergan's method, one would compare these two conflicts, strip them bare of their stereotyping and rhetoric, and try to discover theological principles that may underlie each. That might seem a perfectly reasonable thing to do but, to the knowledge of the author of this thesis, little, if any, of this sort of study has been done. Generally, those involved in commenting on communications conflicts have been prone to take sides, neglecting the effects of their own subjectivity in relation to the subject being considered, and holding tenaciously to their own entrenched positions.

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[150] When Mother Angelica established EWTN in 1991 her effort was applauded by bodies as esteemed as the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy (Public letter from Silvio Cardinal Oddi, Prefect of the Congregation of the Clergy: *Voice from the Vatican – The Eternal Word Television Network*, April, 21, 1992.) and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which said that satisfying the spiritual hunger of ordinary Catholics was to be Mother Angelica's particular new mission: "Starving to death is the person in the pew. This is the person who needs to know how to live Christianity." ("Eternal Word Television Network Begins Broadcasting in August," *NCCB Evangelization – GoodnewsLetter*, July, 1981, p. 1.)

Within a few years, opinion about the enterprise became highly polarized. Some proponents of EWTN nearly sanctified Mother Angelica as a modern-day saint, and opponents went so far as to associate her work with the forces of evil (A Benedictine Sister, who prefers to remain anonymous on this subject, said in a brief interview on July 30, 1997 that Mother Angelica is "the greatest evil that has found its way into our Church in 50 years." The Sister lives and works in the same diocese as Mother Angelica. She says Mother Angelica's intransigent teachings have ripped apart the local church, pitting both priests and parishioners against each other in "a filthy climate of acrimony and hate.")

Raymond T. Gawronski, SJ, suggests that there is a built-in tension between the people for whom Mother Angelica is a voice and other parts of the Catholic Church in the United States. He contends that the tension, the split, is along socio-economic and ethnic lines. (Raymond T. Gawronski, "The Voice of Mother Angelica, Tribune of Blue-Collar Catholics," *New Oxford Review*, April 1996, p. 18-21.)

[151] The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, eleven years after his death declared in 1998 that the writings of Anthony de Mello were "incompatible with the Catholic faith and can cause grave harm." The *Notification* to this effect said, "In his later publications, one notices a progressive distancing from the essential contents of the Christian faith. In the place of revelation which has come in the person of Jesus Christ, he substitutes an intuition of God without form or image ... Father de Mello demonstrates an appreciation for Jesus, of whom he declares himself to be a 'disciple'. But he considers Jesus as a master among all others."

[152] Fr. Balasuriya, OMI, produced a 192-page book, *Mary and Human Liberation*, in the journal, *Logos* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: March/July 1990). Portions of Chapter 1, "Mary in Catholic Devotion," are Marian hymns in Sinhala in its artistic script. The rest are in English. In June, 1994, the bishops of Sri Lanka found the book faulty in its treatment of the doctrine of revelation and instructed Catholics in their dioceses not to read it. A month later the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) invited the Superior General of the priest's missionary congregation to request a public retraction. Balasuriya refused, saying he had been misunderstood. In a *Notification* on January 2, 1997 the CDF declared that Balasuriya's writings and subsequent actions "diminished the universal and permanent value of the definitions of the Magisterium" and excommunicated him.

Lonergan cautions against this by defining theological dialectic as "a generalized apologetic conducted in an ecumenical spirit, aiming ultimately at a comprehensive viewpoint, and proceeding towards that goal by acknowledging differences, seeking their grounds real and apparent, and eliminating superfluous oppositions." Using this definition as a measure, it would appear that the development of a widely accepted theology of Christian communications would need to be broadly inclusive.

f. Functional Specialty 5: Foundations

The fifth functional specialty, foundations, begins the second phase of Lonergan's theological method: the downward movement from the abstract to the concrete, from ideas to history.[153] This step is the result of reflecting on experience. It prepares the way for developing specific theological concepts and actions. It is also the point at which the person or community that is constructing a theology most evidently becomes part of the process.

This fifth functional specialty requires, according to Lonergan, an authentic conversion. "By conversion is understood a transformation of the subject and his world," he says. "It is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away. There emerges something new that fructifies in inter-locking, cumulative sequences of developments on all levels and in all departments of human living."

Conversion defined in this manner becomes both a prerequisite to, and an aid for, continuing the theological process. "As conversion is basic to Christian living, so an objectification of conversion provides theology with its foundations," says Lonergan. "Inasmuch as conversion itself is made thematic and explicitly objectified, there emerges the fifth functional specialty, foundations."

However, Lonergan draws a clear distinction between "foundations" and "fundamental theology," which he considers to be a thing of the past. First, he says, fundamental theology, because it was not preceded by the previous four steps, was *the* starting point of a theological exploration. Second, "Fundamental theology was a set of doctrines, *de vera religione, de legato divinio, de ecclesia, de inspiratione scripturae, de locis theologicis.* In contrast, foundations present, not doctrines, but the horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended."

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[153] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 130-31.

He does concede that, "As conversion may be authentic or unauthentic (sic), so there may be many Christian horizons and not all of them need represent authentic conversion." Nonetheless, he contends that, "Foundations contain a promise both of an elucidation of the conflicts revealed in dialectic and of a selective principle that will guide the remaining specialties concerned with doctrines, systematics, and communications."

A possible implication is that the development of Christian communications theology cannot be done, not authentically at least, by atheists or adherents of other religions. If that is the case, the question then arises as to whether Christian communications can be practised genuinely by anybody but a Christian who has experienced authentic personal conversion.[154] That question is addressed later in this thesis by Pierre Babin.

g. Functional Specialty 6: Doctrines

Upon theological foundations, says Lonergan, are constructed doctrines, the sixth functional specialty of theologians.[155] "Doctrines express judgments of fact and judgments of value," he says. "They are concerned, then, with the affirmations and negations not only of dogmatic theology but also of moral, ascetical, mystical, pastoral and any similar branch ... They have their precise definition from dialectic, their positive wealth of clarification and development from history, their grounds in the interpretation of the data proper to theology."

In other words, Lonergan is saying that doctrines are not created out of thin air, nor are they borrowed from other theological or non-theological systems. Unfortunately, so much of what currently passes as Christian communications theology today is presented almost as though it were doctrine.[156] Most frequently Christian communications theology is snipped, as though it were a newspaper clipping, from one or another Christian theological discipline, non-ecclesial organizational theory, or secular communications theory. Many, if not most of the examples cited in Chapter 2, Section 2 of this thesis ("Christian communications does not have a theology") would fit this description.

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[154] For Lonergan, a person is either an "authentic or unauthentic Christian, genuinely in love with God, or failing in that love, with a consequent Christian or unchristian outlook and style of living." (Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. 541.)

[155] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 132.

[156] Pierre Babin and Angela Ann Zukowski, in the introduction to *The Gospel in Cyberspace: Nurturing Faith in the Internet Age*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), take a broad swipe at Christian fundamentalism, apparently on the *a priori* assumption that is it wrong and to be assiduously avoided in any consideration of Christian communications.

h. Functional Specialty 7: Systematics

Systematics, the seventh functional specialty is, in Lonergan's definition, an attempt "to work out appropriate systems of conceptualization, to remove apparent inconsistencies, to move towards some grasp of spiritual matters both from their own inner coherence and from the analogies offered by more familiar human experience." Systematics, seen this way, he says, is an attempt to bring order, clarity, and cohesion to Christian doctrines.

It is, perhaps, this step that is most blatantly missed by those who wish to articulate a theology of Christian communications. Of the three or four dozen books that have tried to forge some link between Christian communications and the main body of Christian theology, none has attempted to do this in a unified, systematic manner. Most books either include stand-alone theological statements as part of some other discussion about Christian communications or are theological reflections on specific communications issues or activities.

Examples of the latter are the three aforementioned books in the Communication Culture and Theology series: *The Church and Communication*; *Media, Culture and Catholicism*; and *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age*. Together, they represent almost thirty authors, each of whom offers a theological reflection on the subject at hand. Nobody, however, attempts to tie the various theological reflections together into a cohesive, harmonious whole, probably because there exists no systematic theological framework within which to do so.

i. Functional Specialty 8: Communications

The eighth and final functional specialty in Bernard Lonergan's theological method is communications. This functional specialty is explored in some detail in the next chapter of this thesis. Suffice it to say for now that Lonergan believes there are three kinds of communications, each serving theology in its "external relations":[157]

◊ *"There are interdisciplinary relations with art, language, literature, and other religions, with natural and human sciences, with philosophy and history.*

◊ *"There are the transpositions that theological thought has to develop if religion is to retain its identity and yet at the same time find access into the minds and hearts of all cultures and classes.*

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[157] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 132-33.

◊   *"There are the adaptations needed to make full and proper use of the diverse media of communication that are available at any time and place."*

. For the sake of precision, Lonergan might have substituted the word "issues" or "challenges" for the word "kinds." In any case, by placing communications at the very end of his theological method, he gives it the role of situating the fruits of theology in the world. Communications thus provides newly processed data for theologians and others to accumulate, interpret, and so on. Or, in Lonergan's words: "As research tabulates the data from the past, so communications produces data in the present and for the future."[158]

The role to which Lonergan has assigned communications is an honorable one, but one that also carries an onerous responsibility. He has made communications the means by which a theological, and thus ecclesial, community transmits all that which it has come to know and believe. He has made the medium a part of the message. This is not the usual peripheral, incidental role assigned to communications by theologians and Church authorities.

j. And where is love?

In the chart in Section 2.A. of this chapter, mysterious love was portrayed as being the apex of the epistemological and theological process. It was certainly not a coincidence that Lonergan placed between functional specialties 4 and 5, between dialectic and foundations. Lonergan placed it there, at the point where the theological process ends its upward climb towards abstraction and begins its gradual descent back down to observed phenomena, for a reason.

Dialectic involves relationships. It involves engaging in dialog with others in order to reach together towards truth. Foundations requires conversion, a radical change of heart, a new worldview. One cannot move from the dry rigidity of dialectic to the euphoria of conversion without falling in love, without requiring a holistic insight into the truth of that which is being explored. In the realm of theology, the entity being explored is either God, or persons made in His image and likeness, or other creations that give humans a glimpse of the divine.

This falling in love must remain obscure, indefinable, and mysterious because its object is the divine love of the Creator.[159] That, precisely, is why Lonergan places it between the

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[158] Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. 492.

[159] *Method in Theology* makes no specific reference to this subject but Lonergan's view of it is evident in his earlier work, *Insight*. Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. 329.

fourth and fifth functional specialties, why it is associated with the downward turn of the theological method, and why it is the apex, the highest point of theological enquiry.

In the next chapter of this thesis, Pierre Babin describes a road to conversion that may be followed by those who aspire to create or practice Christian communications theology. He begins by showing us the grace-inspired entrance though which the individual can enter into the Christian faith community, a necessary prerequisite to conversion. Marshal McLuhan then explores the result of conversion, what happens when the road pointed out by Babin is, indeed, followed.

Before Babin and McLuhan, though, it is necessary to examine further what Lonergan may have intended with his definition of communications and its placement as the last of the eight functional specialties of theology.

3. INTERLOCKING THEMES

Unfortunately, Lonergan does not devote much effort to working out the problems and challenges of his eighth functional specialty. Nowhere, for instance, does he explain what he means by the three "kinds" of communications nor does he address the challenges they each pose.

Even in the final chapter of *Method in Theology*, which is supposedly devoted to the last functional specialty, Lonergan's discussion trails off into an a typically rambling musing on a seemingly disconnected series of topics. Chapters on most of the other functional specialties are about thirty pages in length. This one, on communications, is less than twenty pages. Oddly, about half way through the chapter, Lonergan seems to abandon communications and starts offering seemingly random reflections on churches, ecclesiology and other topics.

Thus, with a mere fifteen pages devoted to communications of the total of 350 pages in *Method in Theology,* one is left with only hints of what Lonergan may have intended to say about this subject. Some hints are found in two of his earlier works, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, first published in 1957, and "The New Context of Theology," a lecture delivered in 1967. [160] *Method in Theology* was first published in 1972.

From these sources, four interlocking themes in Lonergan's view of communications as a theological discipline:

◊ Communications is a necessary ingredient of Christian theology

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[160] The lecture was delivered in 1967. Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader,* p. 408.

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◊ Communications emanates from and fosters community

◊ Communications is the sharing of theological meaning

◊ Communications must take into account its historical and cultural context.

Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

a. Necessary ingredient of Christian theology

Lonergan maintains that communications is both an end-product and a starting point of theological enquiry.

As an end-product Lonergan places it last in the series of eight functional specialties. "It is in this final stage (communications) that theological reflection bears fruit. Without the first seven stages, of course, there is no fruit to be borne," he says. "But without the last, the first seven are in vain, for they fail to mature ... It is up to theologians to carry out both the first seven specialties and no less the eighth."[161]

However, Lonergan says that which is communicated also becomes raw data for subsequent analysis and, ultimately, action. He contends that communication – including living and acceptance of discovered truths within a given community – becomes, of itself, an historical act. In Lonergan's words, "Commonly accessible insights, disseminated by communication and persuasion, modify and adjust mentalities to determine the course of history out of the alternatives offered by emergent probability." In other words, both the act and content of communicating enables the community to make conscious, real-life, historical decisions.[162]

b. Emanates from and fosters community

Not only does communication serve a useful purpose for a community but, says Lonergan, "Through communication there is constituted community and, conversely, community constitutes and perfects itself through communication."[163] Community cannot exist without communication, and communication cannot exist without community. They are mutually interdependent, he says.

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[161] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 355.

[162] Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p.126.

[163] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 363.

This applies as much to the Church as it does to any other community, he says, but in a special way. "The Christian church is the community that results from the outer communication of Christ's message and from the inner gift of God's love. Since God can be counted on to bestow his grace, practical theology is concerned with the effective communication of Christ's message."[164] In other words, leave the task of supplying the Church with love and grace to God, he says, but do get on with Christian communications.

Insisting on the intrinsic value of the community in the formation of theological insights and the importance of communications in sharing those insights, Lonergan says, "Without a large measure of community, human society and sovereign states cannot function. Without a constant renewal of community, the measure of community already enjoyed easily is squandered," he says. There is a need for "individuals and groups and, in the modern world, organizations that labor to persuade people to intellectual, moral, and religious conversion and that work systematically to undo the mischief brought about by alienation and ideology. Among such bodies should be the Christian church."[165]

c. Sharing of theological meaning

Similarly to Edmund Arens, Lonergan believes that community is formed around the common acceptance of meanings: "To communicate the Christian message is to lead another to share in one's cognitive, constitutive, effective meaning, " says Lonergan. However, he points out that the reverse is also true. "As common meaning constitutes community, so divergent meaning divides it."[166] And, "Just as common meaning is constitutive of community, so dialectic divides community into radically opposed groups."[167]

To mitigate conflict and to foster cohesiveness and unity, Lonergan sees a critical role for communications. "Common meaning calls for a common field of experience and, when that is lacking, people get out of touch," he says.

"It calls for common or complementary ways of understanding and, when they are lacking, people begin to misunderstand, to distrust, to suspect, to fear, to resort to violence. It calls for common judgments and, when they are lacking, people reside in different worlds. It calls for common values, goals, policies and, when they are lacking, people operate at cross-

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[164] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 362.

[165] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 361.

[166] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 357.

[167] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 358.

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purposes," Lonergan says. "Such common meaning is an ongoing process of communication, of people coming to share the same cognitive, constitutive and effective meanings."[168]

Then, Lonergan offers a prescription for those who would be such Christian communicators. He evidently does not believe that everyone is necessarily up for the job: "Those ... that would communicate the cognitive message of God's meaning, first of all, must know it. At their service, then, are the seven previous functional specialties. Next, those that would communicate the constitutive meaning of the Christian message, first of all, must live it. For without living the Christian message one does not posses its constitutive meaning; and one cannot lead another to share what one oneself does not possess. Finally, those that communicate the effective meaning of the Christian message must practice it. For actions speak louder than words, while preaching what one does not practice recalls sounding brass and tinkling cymbal."[169]

d. Historical and cultural context

The fourth theme that appears in Lonergan's view of the functional specialty of communications today might be called "inculturation." It requires theology to interact with the society around it in such a way as to recognize and respect its distinct characteristics.

"The Christian message is to be communicated to all nations. Such communication presupposes that preachers and teachers enlarge their horizons to include an accurate and intimate understanding of the culture and the language of the people they address," he says. "They must grasp the virtual resources of that culture and that language, and they must use those virtual resources creatively so that the Christian message becomes, not disruptive of the culture, not an alien patch superimposed upon it, but a line of development within the culture"[170]

Lonergan's thoughts on inculturation become particularly interesting to the field of Christian communications if one considers them to apply not only to geographically defined cultures – such as those that reside in distant lands – but also to subcultures within our own society (such as youth, or indigenous peoples, or women), and sub-subcultures (such as successive generations of youth, or young indigenous North American women). "The basic distinction is between preaching the gospel and, on the other hand, preaching the gospel as it

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[168] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 356-57.

[169] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 362.

[170] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 362.

has been developed within one's own culture. In so far as one preaches the gospel as it has been developed within one's own culture, one is preaching not only the gospel but also one's own culture. In so far as one is preaching one's own culture, one is asking others not only to accept the gospel but also to renounce their own culture and accept one's own."[171]

Applied to subcultures within our own society, such as those people who have been raised in the era of electronics, Lonergan's thought foreshadows that of Pierre Babin: "A classicist would feel it was perfectly legitimate for him to impose his culture on others. For he conceives culture normatively, and he considers his own to be the norm. Accordingly, for him to preach both the gospel and his own culture, is for him to confer the double benefit of both the true religion and the true culture," Lonergan says. "In contrast, the pluralist acknowledges a multiplicity of cultural traditions. In any tradition, he envisages the possibility of diverse differentiations of consciousness. But he does not consider it his task either to promote the differentiation of consciousness or to ask people to renounce their own culture. Rather he would proceed from within their own culture and he would seek ways and means for making it into a vehicle for communicating the Christian message."[172]

Clearly, Lonergan is saying that the communication of the insights of contemporary theology needs to be done in new and innovative ways. "Not only does the cultural context influence theology to undo its past achievements, but theology is also called upon to influence the cultural context, to translate the word of God and so project it into new mentalities and new situations," Lonergan says.

"So a contemporary Catholic theology has to be not only Catholic but also ecumenist. Its concern must reach not only Christians but also non-Christians. It has to learn to draw not only on the modern philosophies but also on the new sciences of religion, psychology, sociology, and the new techniques of the communication arts," Lonergan concludes.[173]

4. WHAT HAS LONERGAN SAID? SIX DIMENSIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

The most radical idea put forward by Bernard Lonergan in the context of the central argument of this thesis is that it is not only *possible* to construct a theological framework for Christian communications but that Christian communications *is actually a part of theology,*

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[171] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 362–63.

[172] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 363.

[173] Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. 414.

an integral part of the process. If this is, indeed, true, then it is nonsensical, on the one hand, for Christian communications to operate without a broadly inclusive and widely accepted theological base and, on the other, for the various existing disciplines of theology to ignore Christian communications. Christian communications and theology would appear to be a marriage made in heaven but not yet consummated on earth.

Second, Lonergan shows Christian communications a way to develop a theology for itself, a road to follow. It is not a straight and narrow road, though, with only a limited number of entranceways and exits. "*Method* offers no rules to be followed blindly but a framework for creativity,"[174] says Lonergan.

From Lonergan's description of the eight functional specialties, and from his thoughts on the eighth functional specialty of his *Method* and elsewhere, it is possible to extrapolate six principles applicable to the development of Christian Communications, six potentially normative dimensions of the framework, beginning with four based on the above-mentioned themes:

1. Christian communications is a necessary ingredient of Christian **theology**.
2. Christian communications emanates from and fosters **community**.
3. Christian communications is the sharing of theological **meaning**.
4. Christian communications must take into account its historical and cultural **context**.
5. Christian communications draws its "data" from history and, after having processed that data, re-enters **history** and has an effect on it, changes it in some way.
6. The source and culmination of Christian communications is divinely inspired **love**, brought about by individual **conversion**.

These six dimensions are implicit and explicit in the pastoral theology of Pierre Babin, in the underlying communications theories of Marshall McLuhan, and in the teachings of the Church's magisterium. In this respect, the six dimensions are not new. However, the next chapter of this thesis links the admittedly abstract epistemology and cognitive theories of Bernard Lonergan with those in the Church who have struggled with the questions and conundrums of Christian communications for at least half a century. By doing this, the next chapter of this thesis attempts to bring Lonergan, in the area of Christian communications, down to earth, down to the lived and living experienced of Christian communications, and the chapter provides the groundwork upon which can be built a framework for the development of an authentic, dynamic theology of Christian communications.

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[174] Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. xii.

CHAPTER 5

HARMONY WITH MAGISTERIAL THEOLOGY AND CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATIONS THEORY

This chapter illustrates how a framework for Christian communications theology developed by applying Bernard Lonergan's epistemology and theological method to Christian communications is in harmony with the salient communications theories of Pierre Babin and Marshall McLuhan, the ecclesiology of the contemporary Church, and social communications advocacy of the Second Vatican Council.

The three subjects selected for this chapter have been chosen deliberately:

◊ **Pierre Babin** – because he has developed a widely accepted pastoral theology of Christian communications – and written and spoken about it extensively – over the past forty years; because his theology is foundational to a degree that far exceeds the other writers cited in this thesis; and because his theology is based both on an intimate knowledge and appreciation of the ecclesiology of the Church and on a profound understanding of Marshall McLuhan's communications theories.

◊ **Marshall McLuhan** – because his work towers high above that of other communications theorists of the twentieth century; because the prophetic character of his work is now again receiving worldwide attention; and, not least, because his theories were influenced by his deeply held religious beliefs as a Catholic.

◊ **The magisterium and its proponents** – because any theological framework for Christian communications that contradicts the views of the magisterium on this subject would be of limited use; and because an enormous and valuable amount of effort has been expended by Pope John Paul II, by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and other organisms of the Holy See, and by various theologians to lend support to the Christian communications advocacy of the Second Vatican Council.

Specifically, this chapter gives examples of how the six potentially normative dimensions for a framework for Christian communications theology derived from Lonergan's work are evident in the cited works of the three subjects chosen. In their simplest form, the six dimensions portray Christian Communications as:

1. a necessary ingredient of Christian **theology**

2. emanating from and fostering **community**

3. the sharing of theological **meaning**

4. occurring in a particular historical and cultural **context**

5. drawing "data" from **history and**, re-entering history, changing it

6. being inspired by **love** brought about by individual **conversion**.

1. BABIN'S CHALLENGE

What Lonergan has said about Christian communications sheds light on and makes sense of what Pierre Babin, OMI has been saying ever since he had a series of conversations with the eminent communications theorist, Marshall McLuhan.[175] Over the past forty years Babin's observations have gradually gained global acceptance throughout the Church.

For example, on a Monday afternoon in January 2001, the five members of the Social Communications Commission (SCC) of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) gathered around a table in a Toronto hotel room to reflect on an address Pierre Babin delivered fifteen months earlier to the Plenary Assembly of the bishops conference. The purpose of the SCC members was to try to better understand what Babin had said to them and the other bishops in the fall of 1999. Their purpose was to select those of his ideas that may be relevant to the Church in Canada, and to consider how the ideas might be implemented at various levels and in various regions of the country.

Pierre Babin, of Lyons, France, has spoken to and with many such bishops' committees and conferences, and hundreds of other groups in all corners of the world, articulating his insights into what is required of Christian communications in today's world. Babin has devoted his life to this mission ever since his own "conversion" experience at the Universal and International Exhibition and World's Fair in 1967 in Montreal. *(Dimension 6: conversion and love)* There, at a pavilion called "Labyrinth," as a young catechist, Babin realized that communicating religious faith in our age – which had begun to be called the Age of Information – is quantitatively different from everything that preceded it. *(Dimension 4: historical and cultural context; Dimension 5: from and to history)*

To understand the new phenomenon, Babin turned to Marshall McLuhan, at that time the world's leading theorist in what was then known as "mass communication" and, to Babin's amazement, the man whose ideas had inspired the "Labyrinth" pavilion. So Babin read McLuhan's books and traveled to Canada to conduct lengthy interviews with him, all the time wondering how McLuhan's general theories of communication might be applicable to the Church.

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[175] The conversations took place at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, from 1974 to 1977.

a. Babin's remarks to Canadian bishops[176]

The insights that Babin has developed after decades of observation, research, dialog, and discernment are best summarized by the man himself. In the 1999 address to Canadian bishops he paid tribute to his mentor, Marshall McLuhan, "an illustrious Canadian who profoundly changed my life as a priest and a catechist."[177] *(Dim. 6: conversion/love)*

Babin said his personal convictions regarding Christian communications evolved from "McLuhan's fundamental thesis which states that the major causes of change in cultures and civilizations are not ideologies, wars or religions, but rather new communications technologies ... When a new communications technology is created, society finds itself restructured by it, as does the Church. Yesterday, it was the printing press, today it is electronics." Thus, by extension, according to Babin, the Church, as a theological locum, would function in tandem with the historical and cultural context in which it resides. *(Dim. 4: context)*

Babin believes that, as a consequence, "We must radically rethink our pastoral methods, in the same way as the revolution which occurred as a result of the discovery of print technology and culminated in the Council of Trent." In this, he calls for a reorientation of the Church's expression of what it believes. *(Dimension 1: theology)* For example, he says, "We have been invited not to a superficial restructuring of methods ... We must do with electronic media what Luther and Canisius did in their time with the printing press when they invented the catechism, seminaries, etc. ... The Spirit is moving us toward this change: do we not already see the signs?"

"It was Marshall McLuhan who secretly inspired that famous passage in *Redemptoris Missio*," Babin pointed out. "It is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications." *(Dim. 5: history)*

Mindful of the decidedly anti-Christian social ambiance of today's world, Babin said, "I recall the words of Cardinal Stephen Kim, Archbishop of Seoul, who confided this to me about modern culture: 'It is another culture ... I am not prepared for it. I cannot perceive it. I have no intuition what should be done.'" *(4: context)*

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[176] Pierre Babin, OMI, "The Church and Social Communications." An address delivered October 18, 1999 to the Plenary Assembly, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

[177] An excerpt of Pierre Babin's October 1999 address to the Canadian Conference of Catholic bishops is included in Appendix 2

In Babin's view, the authoritative communications models of the past have been replaced in the contemporary world by a dominant "commercial" model. He said, "The term 'commerce' is taken here in its fundamental sense: an exchange of goods after bargaining (negotiation)." This new "commercial" model, by implication, emphasizes not hierarchy but community since, Babin observes, "people unconsciously become interested in the Church only to the extent it provides them something: health, social status, personal growth, fulfillment in a personal spiritual search ... This is what Kierkegaard called "the dictatorship of the audience ... People want to choose, experiment and have guarantees." The side-effect is that theology, through the media of Christian communications, must find ways of drawing its propositions from and depositing its conclusions to the social marketplace. *(Dimension 2: community)*

Under this commercial model, Babin said, "Evangelization must first of all present faith in terms of goods – salvation, healing – rather than in terms of truth. The mission of Christian radio must not be to teach Christian doctrine, but to give joy and reinforce personal identity. Televised Mass must make viewers feel alive and make them happy before provoking reflection or to teach doctrine."[178] Christian Communications, then, in Babin's view, is a method by which theology becomes a "give-and take" process between the proponent and the adherent, a concept in harmony with several of the proposed dimensions. *(Dim. 1: theology; Dim. 3: meaning; Dim. 4: context; Dim. 5: history)*

Babin thinks that the communications media of the modern age, to which the Church has access, can build community in yet another, more symbiotic manner. "Today the communicator and the audience become part of the *medium*. We no longer *use* the media. Instead, we *become a medium* for transmitting goods by communing with the audience, by becoming 'a single entity' with people, whether they are good or bad." *(Dim. 2: community)*

Consequently, Babin said the Church must abandon merely "transmitting the *doctrina christiana.*" Instead, he said, Church leaders should build "networks, communities of affinity, electronic relationships and 'chatting' on the Internet ... Evangelization has to be redefined in terms of conversation or dialogue ... We must move away from proclamation and toward conversation (according to the deepest meaning of conversation – 'to keep company with'), away from the exigencies of conversion and toward a call to friendship. To evangelize is to make friends and invite them to the wedding feast (Mt 22, 14)." Obviously,

according to Babin, a perquisite for the social exchange of theological meaning is love. *(1: theology; 2: community; 3: meaning; 6: conversion/love)*

The love springs from conversion, a turn towards God. "We must ask ourselves why children would come to church to follow the teachings of Christ," he said. "How would it be possible for faith after childhood to remain unaffected by so many influences and so much agitation? One cannot be solid in the faith unless it corresponds to a personal interior awakening. The key to religious communication is relating the language of the Gospel to the progressive awakening of one's inner self." *(6: conversion/love)*

Broadening the concern for others from the individual to the community, he said, "At a certain time in its history, the Church declared itself a social defender of the exploited and the working class. It must now acquire the image and leadership needed to bring about globalization according to the Gospel. Getting into globalization, like getting into the world of media, implies that we give up having the monopoly on truth and religion." The implication is that Christian communications, to the extent that is a critical part of the theological process, must engage itself intimately and dialectically with the world, a proposition put forward by Lonergan. *(5: history)*

Yet, Babin concluded, "Because the current change is so radical, I can foresee that as bishops you will bear a heavy burden. I humbly offer my observations, and invite you to try to relate my remarks to your situation, given that I am not Canadian." It is evident that Babin not only recognizes but insists that the efficacious communication of theological meaning is fully dependent on historical and, relatedly, geographical context. *(4: context)*

b. The New Era in Religious Communications

Babin's 1999 address to the Bishops of Canada summarized the results of decades of research and reflection. Eight years earlier, he had published his observations in a book titled *The New Era in Religious Communication* in which called for a completely new way of communicating the Christian faith, which he called the "Symbolic Way." He said this new way has four prominent characteristics.

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[178] Out of context, Babin's remarks can be misinterpreted. He does not say that truth may be sacrificed to the demands of the marketplace. Rather, he argues that addressing the demands of the marketplace is a necessary prerequisite for effective communication.

1. Extension of technology

The principal characteristic of the Symbolic Way, Babin said, is that it is "an extension of modern electronic technology." Foreshadowing his words to the bishops, he explained that, "The introduction of electronic media has changed the meaning of all of our cultural institutions and every aspect of our structures of thought, including changes to both religious institutions and theological concepts." In other words, Christian communications, and the theology it represents, cannot happen in a contextual void. *(1: theology; (4: context)*

Babin then ventured into semiotics and linguistics, equating the medium with the message and underlining the consentual meaning given to theological communication by the community. *(1: theology; 2: community)* "The language of this new era is not the printed word but audiovisual media," Babin said. "The pope makes himself present everywhere by means of television. Ecclesial unity is established by his image and his voice rather than by the words he utters," so that, in Babin's view, gradually papal letters and encyclicals have been playing a progressively lesser role.

2. Symbolic language

The second characteristic of the Symbolic Way is its reliance on "a language of symbols," Babin said, "There is an urgent need for a new spirit of communication, new methods, a new course." Babin called that new course *"stereo catechesis*, a way of communicating faith from and to both hemispheres of the brain. It is a way of 'mixing' traditional methods of communications, which are mainly linear and intellectual, with modern methods, which tend to be 'symbolic and affective.'" In this way, Christian communications is, for Babin, an opportunity for an exchange of meaning that is deeply rooted in the human psyche. *(3: meaning)*

Babin contended that "The archetypes of the unconscious (Carl Jung's) are empirically demonstrable parallels of religious dogmas." He said the Symbolic Way is "the best way of joining the archetype to its dogmatic counterpart ... It leads not only the spirit, but also the heart; it moves the body. It is a language full of resonances and rhythms, stories and images, and suggestions and connections, which introduces us to a different kind of mental and emotional behavior." *(3: meaning)*

At this level, in harmony with Lonergan's view, Christian communication cannot be superficial or merely intellectual. "Faith is conveyed not so much by words – written or spoken – but by images and sounds," said Babin. "These symbolic, affective methods of arousing spiritual awareness are a necessary prerequisite for and complement to the more

traditional methods of communicating the Christian faith." The conveyance of faith, in other words must be not only from mind to mind but also, and more importantly, from (converted) heart to heart. *(6: conversion/love)*

3. Physical language of vibration/modulation

Babin said the third characteristic of the Symbolic Way is that it is "a very physical language of vibration/modulation" He said it is "a complex and ambiguous whole of sounds, images, words and gestures, relationships, rhythms, scents, and many other factors that bring about a physical conditioning and a psychic emotion, both of which help the deepest demands made by the person and his or her religious archetypes to be awakened." Thus, in Babin's scheme, the communication of faith is an interpersonal activity whereby he who purports to communicate is dependent on a response from the person or persons with whom he or she is exchanging theological meaning. *(2: community; 3: meaning)*

He fortifies this stance by challenging the popular notion that we are in a culture that relies increasingly on visual communication. "The dominant sense ... is hearing, as is evident from the behavior of young people with their Walkmans, and from pop music, rock, and the predominance of rock concerts and clubs ... They can no longer understand, or pray, without being physically moved. Once again, we see the predominance of the ear and therefore a return to a type of oral culture." *(4: context)*

A consequence of this historical shift in how public communication takes place, Babin said, is that it "produces effects that are not so much normative and cerebral as emotional and even physical." Therefore, he said, "The language of the media is not to illustrate ideas but to provide an experience." This necessitates the communicator's willful immersion in the historical world. "Understanding by way of hearing is, in fact, being *inside* a reality, whereas understanding by means of reading is being *above* it," he said. *(5: history)*

4. Importance of ground

In contemporary public communications, Babin contends, the "ground" is at least as important as the "figure." He said that, in fact, the ground delivers the "real" message by creating the "effect" in the viewer. In other words, the ground mediates meaning. *(3: meaning)*

In the religious realm, Babin said, "I would not go so far as to say that the words are nothing. There is no ground without a figure. But what gives the words their impact are the gestures, the environment, the relationships and the extraordinary power of the man Jesus."

Conversion thereby becomes a determinant of Christian communications according to Babin. "For Christians, communication is not just a simple psychological movement inherent in human nature. It is a gift. It is not discovered or invented, but received," he said. *(1: theology; 2: community)*

5. Relevance to Christian communications

"As Paul said, there may be countless teachers in Christ, but begetting faith is something quite different", Babin's book reminded us. "We can communicate doctrines, beliefs, and even Christian enthusiasm, but we cannot communicate the spark of faith." That requires community and love, he contended. "Faith is 'taking part together' in the amplified voice, the shifting light of the candle, the singing and the silence. It is a seeking together in the same direction. Is it an orthodox faith? If orthodoxy means conformity to the definitions and formulas of the church, it is not. But if it means being in intimate contact with a group and an experience of being moved inside oneself, then it is." Like Lonergan, Babin believes that "knowing" God is a process that includes community, conversion and love. *(1: theology; 2: community; 6: conversion/love)*

Out of context, it may appear that Babin's remarks, by emphasizing the impact of personal experience, make light of doctrine and dogma. However, similarly to Lonergan, Babin insists that the effects of personal religious experience be verified within the context of the ecclesial community, including the magisterium. *(1: theology; 2: community)*

Babin concludes by saying the Church has an "unprecedented opportunity to reach all those who are outside the church, including purely nominal Christians. The media can cross walls and be secretly present, touching the hearts of those who are seeking." Christian love, in other words, can take advantage of the current moment of history, he says. *(4: context; 5: history)*

"I have firm convictions about the way in which faith should be communicated in our contemporary world," he says. *(4: context)* "But, at the same time, I have become increasingly aware that the God of whom I speak, and Christ himself, are quite beyond my reach. My convictions are only a small part of the truth. They express the hesitant approach of a man who is trying to understand these times, holding in his hands before him the little book of the gospels. It is only by listening to God, day after day, and in accordance with the grace of each period of history and each culture that one can echo something of God's voice and reflect something of his presence." Thus Babin concurs with Lonergan on the necessity

of the Christian theologian/communicator to be a person who has experienced and re-experienced personal religious conversion. *(6: conversion/love)*

Beginning his personal journey towards such humility and convictions in the mid-1970s, immediately after meeting with Marshall McLuhan, Pierre Babin established a centre for the study of religious communication in Lyons, France and published *The Audio-Visual Man: Media and Religious Education*. Such was the profound influence on Babin, of Marshall McLuhan, the subject of the next section of this thesis.

2. McLUHAN'S THEORIES

Transcripts of four of Babin's lengthy conversations with McLuhan in the late 1960s are reproduced in *The Medium and The Light*, a collection of McLuhan's articles, speeches, letters and interviews on Christianity and, in particular, Catholicism.[179] In the view of many, including the author of this thesis, these four chapters contain the most lucid and useful notions of Christian communications for those who are trying to find a resonant voice for the Church in this current age of electronic information.[180] *(4: context)*

Perhaps surprisingly, most people would not consider Marshall McLuhan to be a theologian. They would likely not even think of him as a committed Christian or a devout Catholic. Yet, in *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*, we discover an intriguing collection of McLuhan's insights, springing from deep within his own faith, into contemporary Catholic ecclesiology. *(6: conversion/love)*

In fact, the book illustrates that McLuhan's two most famous statements, "The Medium is the Message " and "The Global Village" are as likely to be expressions of his attitude to Christianity as they are of his philosophy of modern communications. "In Jesus Christ," he says, for instance, "there is no distance or separation between the medium and the message. It is the one case where we can say that the medium and the message are fully one and the same." This statement alone would lend support to the contention that Christian communications and theology are not separate entities. *(1: theology)*

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[179] Eric McLuhan and Jacek Szklarek. *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion.* (Toronto. Stoddart Publishing, 1999). Despite its subtitle, the book barely touches on other religions. The collection was compiled by his son, Eric McLuhan, and by Jacek Szklarek. Eric McLuhan teaches at the McLuhan Centre at the University of Toronto and is author of several other works on communications theory. At the time the book was published, Szklarek was a Catholic priest. He was educated at the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, and a writer, film director and correspondent for Vatican Radio.

[180] These observations were originally published in *Perspective: a semi-annual examination and application of Catholic and Ignatian Thought.* (Winnipeg. Jesuit Centre for Catholic Studies, St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba. Vol. 4, No. 2, March 2002.)

Ehciting a parallel in the secular world, McLuhan says, "What the advertisers have discovered is simply that the new media of communication are themselves magical art forms. All art is in a sense magical in that it produces a change or metamorphosis in the spectator." The medium is the message, he is saying, and they both are simultaneously constituents and products of history. *(5: history)*

If McLuhan were alive today, he would likely deny that his observations of the Church, or of any other aspects of faith or religion, would qualify him as a theologian. "My father was not a theologian," says McLuhan's son, Eric. "For the most part, his Catholic education was the ordinary one of the convert[181] – as amplified by his own study." Nonetheless, he admits with understatement that his father "would naturally have boned up a bit on this or that topic before writing." This is consistent with the notion that theological reasoning and Christian communication acquire validity in proportion to the degree to which the practitioner has experienced religious conversion. *(6: conversion/love)*

Further underlining the point, Eric McLuhan argues that his father tried to keep his religious beliefs private and denied that his academic work was either framed by or derived from his Catholicism. He argues that the elder McLuhan came to the Church and to his communications theories simultaneously and through the same intellectual process. "His learned approach to the Faith was simply a side-effect of his studies; he had not set out to investigate Catholicism." Eric says his father encountered Catholicism while trying to come to grips with "the nature of human understanding and the entire process of learning and tradition of interpretation right across the whole of the arts and sciences." *(1: theology; 6: conversion/love)*

In other words, McLuhan came to his own theology by gathering "data" from a broad and extensive sweep of history. *(5: history)* McLuhan stumbled upon the Catholic faith by reading and coming to respect Catholic writers. "My father frequently attributed his conversion to the influence of two writers, St. Thomas Aquinas and G. K. Chesterton," says the younger McLuhan. *(2: community; 3: meaning)*

"I am a Thomist for whom the sensory order resonates with the divine logos," Marshall McLuhan wrote in one of the several private letters reproduced in the book. In a letter to his mother he wrote, "I have a taste for the intense cultivation of the Jesuit rather than the emotional orgies of an evangelist – or a poet like Shelley or even Browning in part." In this

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[181] McLuhan, at first an atheist, converted, in the course of his studies, to Christianity and, in particular, Catholicism.

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respect, McLuhan would feel completely at ease with the rigorous communications theology of Bernard Lonergan. *(Dimensions 1 to 6)*

Also agreeing with Lonergan on the significance of community and history, McLuhan arrived at the conclusion that "Every human faculty finds its true use and function only within the Church." Thus, his central ecclesiological question was this: "Has the Church today missed the meaning of the communication revolution as it did in the sixteenth century?" *(2: community; 5: history)*

His answer was that the Church has, indeed, missed the new revolution. "The Church is so entirely a matter of communication that, like fish that know nothing of water, Christians have no adequate awareness of communication." *(4: context)*

Yet, paradoxically and prophetically, McLuhan believed that the "electric media" of our age are drastically transforming the way Christians constitute themselves as Church. He speculated on such subjects as "Liturgy and the Microphone," making the claim that it was technology, and not theology or ideology, that forced out Latin in favour of the vernacular in Catholic liturgies. In another article he asked "Liturgy and Media: Do (North) Americans Go to Church to be Alone?" and answered in the affirmative, thereby challenging the "communalizing" effect of much liturgical change in recent decades. *(4: context)*

"Naturally, I am totally distressed at the total lack of awareness of the rationale of electro-technics among the Catholic hierarchy," he said.[182] "There was no one at the Council of Trent who understood the psychic and social effects of Gutenberg. The Church is no better off now, humanly speaking." *(4: context)*

Warning that the Church is operating aside from its historical and cultural context, he issued a warning: "Today, the alphabet is being wiped out. It is being wiped out electrically. The Church does not know that its fate is tied to literacy; she has never known this. She has taken it for granted because she was born in the middle of literacy."

The result of this isolation, McLuhan would claim, is that the Church's theology has suffered, become petrified. "Paradoxically, the Church found itself embodied from its very beginnings in the only culture that preferred fixed and solid positions," he explained. "The Church, which offers to man and demands of him a constant change of heart, wrapped itself in a visual culture that placed static permanence above all other values. This Greco-Roman culture, which seems to have been imposed on the Church like shell on a turtle, doesn't allow

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[182] This is perhaps an overstatement, a rhetorical hyperbole, but, if true, could partly explain the pedantic content if *Inter mirifica*, the Vatican II document on social communications.

for any possibility for a supple theory of change and communication. It is this hard shell that stands between the Church and the other cultures of the world, all of which have accommodating, flexible, evolving forms." *(1: theology; 4: context; 5: history)*

McLuhan contended, perhaps generating needed controversy, that "The Church, that is, the administrative bureaucracy of ordinary human beings, is never much aware of what is going on ... As a bureaucracy, the Church today is, in a way, a comic set of hang-ups and is no more relevant in its strategies than Don Quixote was when confronted with Gutenberg." *(4: context)*

Yet, as a lover of the Catholic Church, McLuhan was, paradoxically, optimistic: "In its merely bureaucratic, administrative, and institutional side, I think, it is going to undergo the same pattern of change as the rest of our institutions. In terms of, say, a computer technology, we are heading for cottage economies, where the most important industrial activities can be carried out in any little individual shack anywhere on the globe. That is, the most important designs and the most important activities can be programmed by individuals in the most remote areas. In that sense, Christianity – in a centralized, bureaucratic form – is certainly irrelevant ... The Church's massive centralized bureaucracy is certainly passé." *(1: theology; 2: community)*

In the end, McLuhan seemed to believe that the Church will eventually become an influence in the "global village. *(5: history)* He even went so far as to say. "The parish, as a static, territorial form, seems to me to make no sense anymore ... Might the parish in the electric age specifically remain a pliable and adaptable form – software – as I suggested liturgy might be?"

Typically of McLuhan, *The Medium and The Light* is rife with nuggets of mind-teasing thoughts, theories, and observations that extend to theological topics on the periphery of contemporary ecclesiology. "It was a long time before I finally perceived that the character of every society, its food, clothing, arts, and amusements, are ultimately determined by its religion," he wrote in a letter to his mother. And, also to her, he wrote, "The Americans serve 'service.' Like the rest of the world they have smothered man in men and set up the means as an end." *(1: theology; 3: meaning; 4: context; 5: history)*

Many of his observations, therefore, pose interesting questions for current Christian preaching, catechesis, missiology and other, related ministries to consider. For example, he said, "There is no more audience in the world. On this planet the entire audience has been rendered active and participant." He explained by saying, "Our youngsters have been completely taken over by the electric world, which is acoustic, intuitive, holistic, that is,

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global and total ... Young people prefer Zen Buddhism to our Western form of spirituality. They want to be immersed in things and lose the individual self, which is a by-product of the alphabet and the visual world that flows from it. The Eastern Church, especially the Slavs, traditionally tend towards the inner trip." *(3: meaning; 4: context)*

Given McLuhan's flair for the dramatic and provocative, the historic validity of these claims would, of course, require further study, reflection and verification. However, even a cursory familiarity with the subcultures of contemporary Western youth and young adults indicates that there is at least some validity to the claims.

McLuhan further observed that, "What counts today is the image that authority presents, and not the doctrine that it may want to get across. The words are not the message; the message is the effect on us, and that is conversion." And he said, "The all-at once electronic media compel us back to the dialogue. In terms of formal causality, the dialogue is a necessity of education today. The old idea of presenting packaged information one-thing-at-a time, visually ordered, is completely at variance with our electronic media." Such observations support Lonergan's overall method for epistemological and theological reflection. *(Dimensions 1 to 6)*

McLuhan said, "Church authority will have to work via resonance and involvement, inviting the listeners to vibrate together in harmony," obviously believing that Christian communications ought to foster theological reflection as a Church community. *(1: theology; 2: community)*

A weakness – no, perhaps, a frustration – of *The Medium and the Light*, is that McLuhan's reflections are not tied together under a central thesis. Although the book sets out merely to catalogue some of his theological ideas, it provides an opportunity for someone – perhaps drawing on Lonergan – to weave together the various theological strands into a comprehensive and unique approach to contemporary Catholic ecclesiology.

Nonetheless, McLuhan's ecclesiology, at least in the field of communications, clearly reflects the ecclesiology of communion put forward by Vatican Council II. "You live in a global situation in which every event modifies and effects every other event. Not at some *remote* time, not long after the first one, but at the *same* time ... everything happens at once," he said. "The new matrix is acoustic, electric which in one way is very friendly to the Church. That is, the togetherness of humanity is now total. Everybody is now simultaneously in the same place and involved in everybody." This view supports the aspect of communion ecclesiology that de-emphasizes the significance of institutional hierarchy in the Church. *(2: community; 3: meaning)*

In summary, on the sharing of theological meaning, McLuhan said, "Unity grounds itself primarily in Christ's speech: 'My sheep hear my voice.' The true form of possible unity in the Church comes from the ability of all Christians to hear this speech." This observation is compatible with the idea that communion in the Church is achieved by a common link to Christ, particularly through the Eucharist. *(1: theology; 2: community; 3: meaning)*

Yet, McLuhan pleads that "I would prefer that questions of that sort be dealt with by theologians but they do not seem interested. I do not think that the powerful forces imposed on us by electricity (electronics) have been considered at all by theologians and liturgists." Exceptions, perhaps, were Bernard Lonergan and Pierre Babin.

Babin, the Oblate catechist who interviewed Marshall McLuhan in the late 1960s, is as qualified as anyone else to incorporate McLuhan's ecclesiological and communications theories into the life of the Church. It is Babin, more than anyone else, who has tried to form a bridge of understanding between the apparent eclecticism of McLuhan's theories and his profound insights into Christian ecclesiology. The fruits of Babin's endeavors are evident, sometimes obliquely, in the advocacy of Christian communications put forward by the Church's magisterium.

3. THE MAGISTERIUM'S ADVOCACY

The six dimensions proposed for a theological framework for Christian communications are implicit in various documents and statements that advocate the use of Christian communication emanating from the Holy See, from elsewhere in the magisterium, and from those who actively support the magisterium on this matter.

That which follows illustrates the magisterium's thinking on this subject. The sampling, though admittedly small and certainly not representative of the entire magisterium, does illustrate the magisterium's thinking on the subject. *Aetatis Novae* was selected as an illustration because it encapsulates the magisterium's most recent thinking on the broad subject of Christian communications.[183] The other illustrations are a cross-section of pronouncements of greater and lesser import – from speeches to official documents, from the words of a local bishop to those of the Pontifical Council on Social Communications and the Pope himself.

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[183] *Inter mirifica* and *Communio et progressio*, the predecessors of *Aetatis Novae*, are referenced in other parts of this thesis.

a. Bishop Hollis: Communications is a priority

Bishop Crispin Hollis of Portsmouth, England, participating in a 2002 symposium on electronic media, and former president of the Media Committee of the European bishops' conference (CEEM), said, "Communication is increasingly a priority on the Church's agenda because we are immersed in a culture which is so heavily dominated by the media ... All information and expressed opinions are rapidly communicated by increasingly effective technology and the Church, like any other organization, has to speak to the culture of the day in the language of that culture."[184] The bishop's statement reflects the fourth of the dimensions, historical and cultural context, proposed for a theological framework for Christian communications. *(4: context)*

Echoing the second dimension, community, Bishop Hollis said, "We are called into community and into communion so that we can proclaim the Gospel. "Christ did not call us simply to look after ourselves but he called us into a communion of disciples so that, in mission, we can be sent out to proclaim the Gospel to the whole of creation." *(2: community)*

Supporting the first dimension, linking Christian communications with theology, he said. "The Church which has lost sight of its need to communicate is a Church which has lost its way. Communication – evangelization – mission – is the *sine qua non* for the Catholic Church in Europe and worldwide." *(1: theology)*

Echoing Babin's thoughts, Bishop Hollis concluded, "Modern media give us a whole new and exciting way of doing this and media culture is the language which we have to learn and in which we have to speak so that "the hungry sheep who look up, can be fed with the Good News of Christ." *(4: context; 5: history)*

And reminiscent of Lonergan's concepts about conversion and love, the bishop said. "We have to remember that the media are no more than what they are – means – and means to an end. In the last analysis, there can be no substitute for the personal conviction of a lived and witnessing faith in Jesus Christ." *(6: conversion/love)*

b. *Aetatis Novae*

Aetatis Novae, the current Catholic normative document on Christian communications contains no explicit unifying concept or theology. "We do not pretend to say the final word on a complex, fluid, rapidly changing situation," its authors readily admit, "but simply wish

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[184] Bishop Hollis was interviewed November 3, 2002, four days before the start of "Parables on Electronic Media. Building Culture in the Era of Communication," a symposium in Rome organized by the Italian bishops' conference. (*Zenit*, ZE02110303)

to provide a working tool, and a measure of encouragement, to those confronting the pastoral implications of the new realities."[185] *(4: context)*

The document's stated subject is "social communications" but it focuses almost entirely on mass media *(5: history)* and, concludes with a pastoral plan for the institutional Church. Nonetheless, *Aetatis Novae,* issued by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, does contain several of Bernard Lonergan's (and Babin's and McLuhan's) ideas, and the six dimensions of a potential framework for a theology of Christian communications.

The document is in two parts. The first is a reflection on the role of communications in modern society and its implications for the Church. *(3: meaning; 4: context)* The second is an invocation to pastoral planning for social communications. *(5: history)*

i. First part: Reflection

Referring to the current "revolution in human communications" and citing its predecessor, *Communio et Progressio,* developed in response to Vatican II, *Aetatis Novae* says, "'The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications' which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a 'global village'. The means of social communications have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large.'" The document thus forms a link among Christian communications, community, and history. *(2: community; 4: context; 5: history)*

Recognizing that Christian communications interacts with the "data" of history" and has the potential to foster community, the document observes that, "The power of media extends to defining not only what people will think but even what they will think about. Reality, for many, is what the media recognize as real; what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance." It thus concedes that the content of Christian communications can, in fact, be theology. *(1: theology; 3: meaning; 2: community; 5: history)*

Aetatis Novae, therefore, calls on the Church to play a more visible and significant role in the new Areopagus. "As the Church always must communicate its message in a manner suited to each age and to the cultures of particular nations and peoples, so today it must communicate in and to the emerging media culture," the document says, reflecting the fourth and fifth dimensions, context and history. *(4: context; 5: history)*

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[185] Obviously, the document's purpose was pastoral and not strictly theological. It was released in the Vatican on February 22, 1992 "More than a quarter century after the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's decree on social communications, *Inter Mirifica,* and two decades after the pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio.*"

More succinctly, it implies that Christian communications is an exchange of theological meaning. "Communications in and by the Church is essentially communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ," the document says. "It is the proclamation of the Gospel as a prophetic, liberating word to the men and women of our times; it is testimony, in the face of radical secularization, to divine truth and to the transcendent destiny of the human person." *(3: meaning)*

In fact, *Aetatis Novae* places responsibility for Christian communications on every individual: "History itself is ordered toward becoming a kind of word of God, and it is part of the human vocation to contribute to bringing this about by living out the ongoing, unlimited communication of God's reconciling love in creative new ways. We are to do this through words of hope and deeds of love, that is, through our very way of life." This implies conversion towards the love of God. *(6: conversion/love)*

In this way, *Aetatis Novae* also recognizes the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II. *"Communio et Progressio* is rooted in a vision of communication as a way toward communion. Far 'more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion', it declares, "communication is 'the giving of self in love'. In this respect, communication mirrors the Church's own communion and is capable of contributing to it." *(2: community)*

In the context of the Church as communion, *Aetatis Novae* says, "The dedicated bishops, clergy, religious and lay people engaged in this critically important apostolate deserve the thanks of all." And it goes so far as to say the Church "acknowledges its own duty to offer formation to communications professionals and to the public, so that they will approach media with 'a critical sense which is animated by a passion for the truth'." Conversion, again, is seen as essential to Christian communications. *(6: conversion/love)*

However, echoing Lonergan, particularly the fourth and sixth proposed dimensions *(4: context; 6: conversion/love)*, the document says, "Church personnel require at least a working grasp of the impact which new information technologies and mass media are having upon individuals and society ... They need to know how to invite others into dialogue, avoiding a style of communicating which suggests domination, manipulation, or personal gain." *(2: community)*

ii. Second part: Pastoral planning

Aetatis Novae ends by offering pastoral advice to those in the Church who wish to communicate publicly: The document, consistently with Lonergan's ideas about community and Christian communications being part of theology, says, "Communication must lie at the

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heart of the Church community" *(2: community)* and emphasizes that, "Every episcopal conference and diocese should therefore develop an integrated pastoral plan for communications, preferably in consultation with representatives of international and national Catholic communications organizations and with local media professionals. Furthermore, communications ought to be taken into account in formulating and carrying out all other pastoral plans, including those concerning social service, education, and evangelization." *(4: context, 5: history)*

Further reflecting Lonergan's thought as summarized in the six dimensions, *Aetatis Novae* states, "The Church's strategies in the field of social communications must be based on the results of sound media research which have been subjected to informed analysis and evaluation. It is important that communications research include topics and issues of particular relevance to the mission of the Church in the particular nation and region involved." *(4: context, 5: history*

iii. Relevance

Unfortunately, this important document has two critical weaknesses.

One weakness is that the pastoral practices advocated in the second part of *Aetatis Novae* are not connected in an evident manner to the theological reflections in the first part of the document. This can be seen by comparing the portions of the document cited above.

The other weakness is that, typically, the document is loose with definitions and terminology. Most visibly, it confuses the terms "communications" and "media." For example: "Catholic media work is not simply one more program alongside all the rest of the Church's activities: social communications have a role to play in every aspect of the Church's mission. *(1: theology; 3: meaning)* Thus, not only should there be a pastoral plan for communications, but communications should be an integral part of every pastoral plan, for it has something to contribute to virtually every other apostolate, ministry, and program."

Despite these weaknesses, the excerpts from *Aetatis Novae* cited above illustrate that the proposed theological framework based on communion ecclesiology and, subsequently, on the thinking of Bernard Lonergan is in harmony with the teaching of the magisterium on this subject. *(Dimensions 1 to 5)*

c. The Pope speaks

Pope John Paul II has, himself, commented extensively on Christian communications, recognizing its historical and cultural context. "There is no question that the media today

exercise a most powerful and pervasive influence, forming and informing public opinion on a local, national and global scale," he said to participants in last year's annual plenary meeting of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.[186] *(4: context; 5: history)*

Unfortunately, in the same speech he randomly interchanged the notion of Christian communications in general with the very specific role of mass media. He continued the passage cited above with these words: "A passage from Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians comes to mind: "Let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another" (4:25). These words of the Apostle form an apt summary of what should be two basic aims of modern social communications: making the truth ever more widely known, and increasing solidarity within the human family." *(1: theology; 2: community; 3: meaning; 5: history; 6: conversion/love)*

"This Good News is to be shared by all peoples of all times and places, and it is your precise duty to make it ever more effectively present in the world of the media," he said to the members of the Pontifical Council, acknowledging that Christian communications has a reciprocal relationship with the world at large. *(4: context; 5: history)*

Citing his message for the 37th World Day of Social Communications on June 1, 2003, the Holy Father noted that "the fundamental moral requirement of all communications is respect for and service of the truth ... Freedom to seek and speak what is true is essential to human communication, not only in relation to facts and information but also, and especially, regarding the nature and destiny of the human person, regarding society and the common good, regarding our relationship with God. In this way, the Holy Father implied that the reciprocal relationship between Church and society relies on the deployment of Christian communications for the purpose of sharing theological meaning. *(3: meaning)*

"Truth and solidarity are two of the most efficacious means available for overcoming hatred, resolving conflict and eliminating violence," he said. "They are also indispensable for re-establishing and strengthening the mutual bonds of understanding, trust and compassion that unite all individuals, peoples and nations ... In short, truth and solidarity are necessary if humanity is to succeed in building a culture of life, a civilization of love, a world of peace," he concluded, underscoring the proposed dimensions of community and love. *(2: community; 6: conversion/love)*

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[186] *Zenit*, ZE03032504 (Vatican: Mar. 25, 2003.)

d. The Pontifical Council: Ethics in Communications

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the president of which is Archbishop John P. Foley, is the Church's principal "policy making" body in the field of Christian communications. As such, it occasionally issues written perspectives on matters of current interest. *(2: community)* One such effort was a document entitled *Ethics in Communications*, published in June 2000[187] *(4: context)*

"The Church has reasons of her own for being interested in the means of social communication," the documents says,[188] acknowledging that Christian communications involves the development of theology in the context of a broad community. *(1: theology; 3: meaning)* "The Church also knows herself to be a *communio*, a communion of persons and eucharistic communities, 'rooted in and mirroring the intimate communion of the Trinity' *(Aetatis Novae*, 10) ... Communication in and by the Church finds its starting point in the communion of love among the divine Persons and their communication with us."

The documents thus ventures into a theology of mass media, one form of public communications, that is consistent with the six proposed dimensions. "The media are called to serve human dignity by helping people live well and function as persons in community. *(4: context; 5: history)* Media do this by encouraging men and women to be conscious of their dignity, enter into the thoughts and feelings of others, cultivate a sense of mutual responsibility, and grow in personal freedom, in respect for others' freedom, and in the capacity for dialogue." *(3: meaning; 6: conversion/love)*

The document's reach slowly broadens from mass media to public communications in general, consistently with the proposed dimensions of community and context: "In all these settings – economic, political, cultural, educational, religious – as well as others, the media can be used to build and sustain human community. And indeed all communication ought to be open to community among persons ... Communication that serves genuine community is 'more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level, it is the giving of self in love' *(Communio et Progressio*, 11). Communication like this seeks the well-being and fulfillment of community members in respect to the common good of all. But consultation and dialogue are needed to discern this common good. Therefore it is imperative for the parties to social communication to engage in such dialogue and submit

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[187] World Communications Day, Rome, June 4, 2000.

[188] Unfortunately, "social communications," "media," "means of communications" and other terms again are used interchangeably and lead to confusion.

themselves to the truth about what is good." *(2: community; 3: meaning; 4: context; 5: history; 6: conversion/love)*

Ethics in Communications then gradually also extends its theological reflection into the realm of religious media, confirming the link between Christian communications and theology: "Many people's religious lives are greatly enriched through the media. They carry news and information about religious events, ideas, and personalities; they serve as vehicles for evangelization and catechesis. Day in and day out, they provide inspiration, encouragement, and opportunities for worship to persons confined to their homes or to institutions." *(1: theology; 3: meaning; 4: context)*

Finally, in harmony with the sixth dimension *(6: conversion/love)*, the document establishes broad ethical principles for "social communications": "In all three areas – message, process, structural and systemic issues – the fundamental ethical principle is this: The human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media of social communication; communication should be by persons to persons for the integral development of persons. Integral development requires a sufficiency of material goods and products, but it also requires attention to the "inner dimension" *(Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 29; cf. 46). Everyone deserves the opportunity to grow and flourish in respect to the full range of physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual goods. Individuals have irreducible dignity and importance, and may never be sacrificed to collective interests." *(3: meaning)*

Establishing a second ethical principle for social communications, and consistently with the proposed dimension regarding community, the document asserts that, "The good of persons cannot be realized apart from the common good of the communities to which they belong. *(2: community)* This common good should be understood in inclusive terms, as the sum total of worthy shared purposes to whose pursuit community members jointly commit themselves and which the community exists to serve. Thus, while social communication rightly looks to the needs and interests of particular groups, it should not do so in a way that sets one group against another – for example, in the name of class conflict, exaggerated nationalism, racial supremacy, ethnic cleansing, and the like." *(6: conversion/love)*

Ethics in Communications concludes with a theological reflection on communications in general. In doing so it aligns itself with several of the proposed dimensions. "Human communication has in it something of God's creative activity," it says. *(1: theology)* "The Christian communicator in particular has a prophetic task, a vocation: to speak out against the false gods and idols of the day – materialism, hedonism, consumerism, narrow

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nationalism, and the rest – holding up for all to see a body of moral truth based on human dignity and rights, the preferential option for the poor, the universal destination of goods, love of enemies, and unconditional respect for all human life from conception to natural death." *(4: context; 5: history; 6: conversion/love)*

The weakness of the document, in the context of this thesis, is obvious. Once again, there is a problem with inconsistency of terminology and definitions. Nonetheless, it is again clear that the theological framework proposed by this thesis supports the teachings of the magisterium.

e. The Pope and the Council on the Internet

"The Internet causes billions of images to appear on millions of computer monitors around the planet," the Holy Father said in announcing his message for World Communications Day 2002, clearly insinuating that Christian communications is a vehicle for gathering theological data from history and, once refined, placing it back into history *(4: context; 5: history)*: "From this galaxy of sight and sound will the face of Christ emerge and the voice of Christ be heard?" he said.[189] *(1: theology; 3: meaning)*

"For it is only when his face is seen and his voice heard that the world will know the glad tidings of our redemption," the Pope added, insinuating his respect for historical and cultural context. *(4: context; 5: history)*"This is the purpose of evangelization. And this is what will make the Internet a genuinely human space, for if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man." *(3: meaning)*

"In these troubled times," he asked, mindful of the historical and cultural context within which we live, "how can we ensure that this wondrous instrument first conceived in the context of military operations can now serve the cause of peace? Can it favor that culture of dialogue, participation, solidarity and reconciliation without which peace cannot flourish?" *(2: community; 4: context)*

Then, in the document itself, he said, again tying together Christian communications with theology and its historical context, "The history of evangelization is not just a matter of geographic expansion, for the Church has also had to cross many cultural thresholds, each of which called for fresh energy and imagination in proclaiming the one Gospel of Jesus Christ. The age of the great discoveries, the Renaissance and the invention of printing, the Industrial

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[189] *Zenit*, ZE02012208, (Vatican:, Jan. 22, 2002.). The document was released in advance of World Communications Day in May 2002

Revolution and the birth of the modern world: these, too, were threshold moments that demanded new forms of evangelization. Now, with the communications and information revolution in full swing, the Church stands unmistakably at another decisive gateway." *(1: theology; 3: meaning; 4: context; 5: history)*

f. Archbishop Foley on information networks

In June 2002 Archbishop John P. Foley delivered an address in celebration of that year's World Communications Day in which he recognized the potential for Christian communications to impart and receive theological meaning. "The Internet offers the Church the opportunity to make available to everyone in the world with access to the Internet the saving message of Jesus Christ," he said. *(3: meaning)* "In societies which will not permit the presence of priests or sisters or brothers or even lay missionaries, the Internet can bring to those engaged in a spiritual search or even to those who are merely curious an opportunity for information and inspiration to which they otherwise would not have access."[190] *(4: context)*

The archbishop cited, as an example, an organization called RIIAL *(la Red Informatica de la Iglesia in America Latina)*, "an information network of the Church in Latin America." *(4: context)* RIIAL is coordinated by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and by CELAM, the Latin American bishops' conference.

RIIAL's capabilities, according to Archbishop Foley, include "sharing information from and with Rome and among the bishops' conferences and indeed dioceses of Latin America ... providing a source of important documentation, not only recent Church statements but also biblical and patristic studies ... stimulating the development of a Spanish-language information service for the Church ... developing useful directories, and forming a generation of church officials and technicians who have a vision of the Church which is both contemporary and Catholic – in all senses of the term." With these words the archbishop underlined the role of Christian communications in articulating theology and fostering community. *(1: theology; 2: community; 4: context)*

Drawing further from this example, and referring implicitly to the dimensions of historical context and love, the archbishop concluded that, "In a manner which has not yet been fully and formally developed by the Church, the Internet offers an opportunity for dialogue, for response to questions, for interactive instruction and even for pastoral

counseling. It does not offer the opportunity for on-line confession – which must always be done in the sacramental context of personal encounter." *(4: context; 6: conversion/love)*

The Archbishop also spoke with justifiable pride about the Vatican's own national Internet suffix: .va. "That does not mean that many other sites related to the Catholic Church are not authentic – especially those connected with bishops' conferences or dioceses," he said, cognizant of the contextual and theological dimensions of Christian communications. "It merely means that the '.va' domain is a guarantee of authenticity which others cannot have because they operate in a competitive world in which non-authentic sites which seek to give the impression of being Catholic have been developed." *(1: theology; 4: context)*

The 2002 World Communications Day message from Archbishop Foley is but one of many that could have been selected to illustrate that the theological framework for Christian communications proposed by this thesis is, indeed, in harmony with the pastoral teaching of the Catholic Church.

g. Pattern

In the above examples – drawn from Pierre Babin, Marshall McLuhan and various pronouncements of the Church's magisterium – there is ample evidence of the six dimensions of the theological framework for Christian communications that can be derived from the thought of Bernard Lonergan.

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[190] *Zenit*, (Vienna: Jun. 7, 2001).

CHAPTER 6

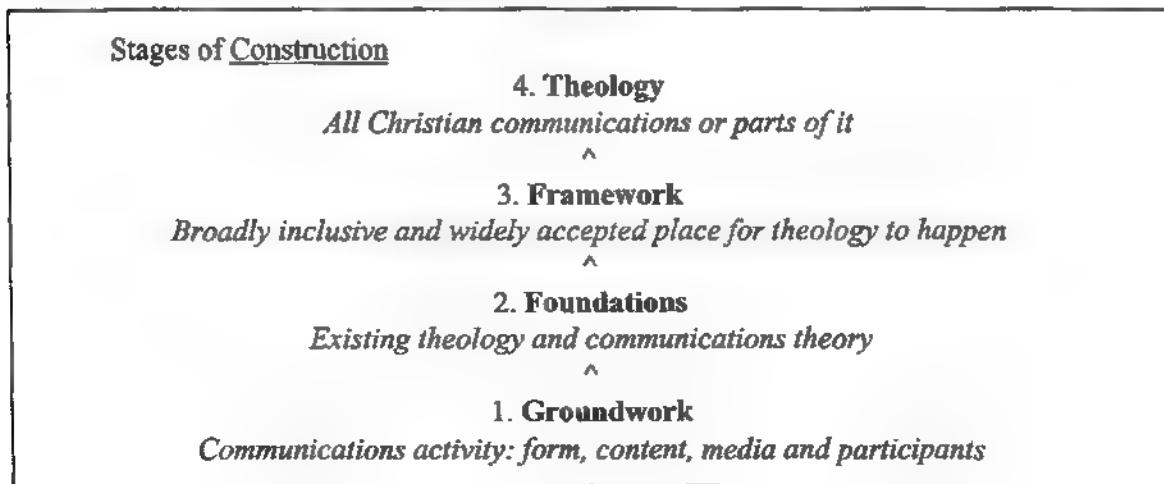## APPLICATION OF THE PROPOSED APPROACH

1. INTENT

A claim was made at the beginning of this thesis that there does not appear to be a broadly inclusive and widely accepted theological basis for Christian communications. Everything else in and pertaining to the Church is based on theology, whereas Christian communications seems to be the exception.

It was also stated that this thesis is not an attempt to articulate an actual theology of Christian communications but that it is, rather, an attempt to propose a process by which such a theology can be developed and maintained. In other words, the stated aim was to construct a conceptual framework within which Christian communications theology can take place.

At the outset, for reasons explained earlier, the intent was to create a construction process that first proceeds upwards from experience, not downwards from doctrine or concept. It was proposed that the theological groundwork be that which *is* in the field of Christian Communications, not that which *should be* or *might be*.

Upon this groundwork would be built an actual framework within which theologizing about Christian communications could take place.

The process of aspiring towards a theology of Christian communications was summarized with the following diagram.

Stages of <u>Construction</u>

4. Theology
All Christian communications or parts of it
^
3. Framework
Broadly inclusive and widely accepted place for theology to happen
^
2. Foundations
Existing theology and communications theory
^
1. Groundwork
Communications activity: form, content, media and participants

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The hope was that the proposed framework would help enable the emergence of an ongoing, living and authentic Christian communications theology inextricably tied to the historical pilgrimage of the Church, the teachings of its magisterium, the revelation of the Scriptures and all other branches of Christian theology.

2. PROCEDURE

In simple terms, the procedure followed by this thesis has tried to show:

◊ That Christian communications is ubiquitous, but it does not indeed have a broadly inclusive and widely accepted theology;

◊ That several people have tried to articulate such a theology but their efforts have not led to a practicable consensus;

◊ That an authentic theology must reflect the true nature of the Church and the most suitable model of church is communion ecclesiology;

◊ That the six potentially normative dimensions for a framework for Christian communications theology derived from the work of Bernard Lonergan are present, explicitly and implicitly, in the words of Babin, McLuhan, and the magisterium.

Having followed this procedure and placed Lonergan's methodology at the center of it, since it appears clearly to reflect the intent of Vatican II, what expectations would there be for a new, emerging theology of Christian communications?

3. EXPECTATIONS

Basing a new and authentic theological framework for Catholic Christian communications on an application of Lonergan's thinking and on the precepts of communion ecclesiology would create at least the following:

◊ The theological framework would emerge from the very nature of the Church itself. It would not be a corporate, government or political theological framework. Planning theological frameworks implicit in the approaches taken by national and regional conferences of Catholic bishops, and supported by such theological commentators as Patrick Granfield, Robert A. White and Angela Ann Zukowski would be critically re-examined.

◊ The new theological framework would be not only human. It would incorporate the divinely mystical. It would accommodate conversion and *mysterious* love. Therefore, it would be, as much as anything else, intuitive and affective, not just planned, rational, based on audience research, structured campaigns, and so on.

◊ The theological framework would not be only institutional. Church institutions would establish broad frameworks within which people who are in communion with the Church through their bishops would be encouraged and enabled to express the divine truth.

◊ The theological framework would acknowledge and celebrate the universal nature of the Church as expressed by the collegiality of bishops with the Pope as their head.

◊ The theological framework would consider the distinction between clergy and laity. It would assume communion and mutual respect between clergy and laity, and assign different but complementary roles to each.

◊ The theological framework would provide for specific communications programs and activities to depend on, and be adaptable to, the circumstances of each local church, including such factors such as local history, personalities, demographics, etc.

◊ In order to be open to God's mystery, the theological framework would include provision for prayer, dialog and faith education as essential ingredients.

◊ The theological framework would include education and training of clergy and lay people as to their specific roles in Christian communications and the various techniques they could use to bear witness to divine truth. Perhaps – and only, perhaps – communications by clergy would be primarily *internal* – within the Church – and communications by laity would be primarily *external* – that is, journalists, filmmakers, doctors, businessmen, teachers, scientists, and other lay people would communicate faith in the world.

◊ The theological framework would place complete trust in the one, living, graced-filled Church that Jesus Christ established for all eternity. At the same time, the framework would trust the unceasing work of the Holy Spirit in the individual human heart.

◊ The theological framework would promote forms of communication that are distinctly Catholic while acknowledging and respecting other Christian and non-Christian forms of religious expression.

◊ The theological framework would continually evolve, taking into account new insights into divine truth and new understandings of the Church. Research into developing the theological framework would be ongoing.

4. HOW TO DO IT?

The six dimensions of Lonergan's epistemology and cognitive theory that are applicable to Christian communications, and the proposals of Pierre Babin, provide a framework for a theology of Christian communications that would put order and life into the Christian communications advocacy of Pope John Paul II, the Social Communications Commission of the Holy See, and its many proponents around the world. The remaining question is how such a framework might be constructed.

For instance, however sensible Babin's ideas may be, they are but a drop in the ocean of the many questions yet be to explored in the field of Christian communications. For example:

◊ How does one begin to use the *symbolic way* in the real world? The real world is one of inconsistency, flux and transition. In this world there are ingrained, resistant institutional and personal traditions and habits to overcome. There are many people, especially older ones, who have not been accustomed to the *symbolic way* of communication.

◊ How does the *symbolic way* of communication co-exist or complement the older, more linear way of religious education and communication? Since the *symbolic way* is not prone to the communication of precise, abstract concepts – such as doctrine – how does one set up programs, activities or events, that achieve an appropriate balance (or "mix" as Babin calls it) between intellectual and affective communication?

◊ How does one advocate the *symbolic way* without appearing to be anti-intellectual or in opposition to the magisterium? For instance, how does one avoid misunderstandings of Babin's cautions about the use of the printed word to articulate the tenets of faith and the ways in which doctrines are communicated?

◊ How will the language of the Symbolic Way develop? How will we uncover symbols that are authentic to creator and receiver? Which symbols will prove to be most effective? Will symbols have the same meaning for all people in all places at all times?

◊ What will be the effect on Christian communication, and on communication in general, of the newest technologies such as multi-media computers, digital imaging, Internet, and so on, and of technologies yet to come?

A hundred other questions could be added to these before one even began constructing the framework. Before long, however, one would be entangled in an infinite web of self-multiplying questions and endlessly receding answers. That would be reason for despair, one were not to remember two key ideas put forward earlier in the thesis, the first by Lonergan, the second by Edmund Arens:

◊ Method *offers no rules to be followed blindly but a framework for creativity.*[191]

◊ *In a certain respect, the Church itself is the subject, location, medium and goal of the communicative action of Christians. The Church as a community of communication serves in a double sense the communication of the gospel or the communication of Christ. Jesus Christ is communicated in the church and through the church's mediation. At the same time, Jesus Christ acts communicatively in the Church.*[192] *In*

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[191] Morelli and Morelli, *The Lonergan Reader*, p. xii.

[192] Edmund Arens, 'Christus in unsere heutigen Kontexte kommunizieren- Christologische Zugange zu einer Theologie der Kommunikation,' CS 25 (1002): pp. 45-62.

the Church it is not only diverse subjects who have the task – be it connected with a specific office or universal to all Christians – of carrying out the communication of Christ. The Church itself is the subject of this communication.[193]

Joined together, these ideas add up to a simple statement, "Acknowledge and release the creativity of all rank and style of people in the Church. Enable them all – bishops, theologians, ordinary churchgoers, teenagers, musicians and social workers – to be Christian communicators. Encourage them each to speak the faith that is etched – from scripture, tradition, community, the Spirit, and the magisterium – deep within their hearts.

Does that sound like anarchy? Does it sound like the implicit freewheeling theology of the Christian "free churches"? It is not, if every communicator takes into account, to a greater or lesser degree, the six dimensional framework that arises from the thinking of Bernard Lonergan.

5. CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of a new, dynamic theology Christian Communications would be circumscribed and defined by the six dimensions of a Lonergan-inspired framework. Following then are the six dimensions and their consequent characteristics for a theological framework for Christian communications.

a. Dimension 1: Christian communications is a necessary ingredient of Christian theology

◊ Since theology begins with what is observed in history, it is not the exclusive domain of theologians or church authorities; every Christian is called to "Be attentive" to that in the world which speaks directly or metaphorically of the presence of God.

Every Christian is a Christian communicator. Any theology of Christian communications must begin with research into and observation of what is and has been communicated, who is doing it, what the media and messages are, and who is receiving it in what manner.

◊ "Be intelligent" in trying to understand what is before you is Lonergan's advice. Mere observation of historical phenomena and jumping to quick theological conclusions about them is a dangerous theological shortcut.

A theology of Christian communications does not give credence to imitators, to those Christians who communicate unquestioningly the way everybody else (outside the Church) does. Christian communications, because it imparts insights into the divine, is like no other. Christian communications theology tries

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[193] Arens, *Christopraxis*, p. 150.

to understand what underlies communications methods, which values, which beliefs, doctrines and dogmas.

◊ Using science, management theory, or leading-edge philosophy to make judgments on that which one has come to understand about the people, things and events of the world is being theologically near-sighted. "Be reasonable," Lonergan would say, and place what you see in historical perspective, particularly in regards to the ancient tradition of the Church.

Although the Church must continually renew itself in its beliefs and its ministry, every new and authentic way of Christian communication is cognizant of and builds upon the ways that went before it.

◊ A theological hypothesis based on observation, interpretation, and historical perspective is not the end of the theological process, it is but the beginning; Once you have come to a theological hypothesis, "Be responsible," Lonergan says, and place your hypothesis before others, so that you may enter into dialog with them.

Those who make authentic theological statements about Christian communications do so in dialog and in unison with others. Theological loners, especially those whose formation is solely outside the church, are suspect.

◊ A theological hypothesis and dialog that operates only on the rational side of the brain can hold no true meaning, cannot be complete; you must undergo a full conversion with regard to what you have discovered, says Lonergan; you must fall in love with it, with God, and with those with whom you are in dialog.

Authentic Christian communications and, by extension, Christian communications theology, can be done only by Christians, not by atheists or by those who have chosen not to be in communion with the Church.

◊ Having gained some inarticulated theological insight one now has a foundation for beginning to articulate a new theological statement; once again, "Be responsible," says Lonergan, and decide where you stand.

Theological statements about Christian communications are authentic only when they stem from a broader theology. Stand-alone, theological "sound bites" about Christian communications cannot be taken seriously.

◊ Upon the theological foundation that results from experience, reflection and love your mind can start to conceive of doctrines; "Be reasonable" and try to put some rational order to what you have come to know, says Lonergan.

Theological statements about Christian communications have some internal order and cohesiveness. They have some rational, intellectual rigor.

◊ Since no doctrine can stand alone, it must be integrated, through systematics, with existing theology; fit and adjust what you have learned into what is already known, "Be intelligent, says Lonergan.

No theological statement about Christian communications is an island onto itself. It is linked intrinsically to all other theological disciplines.

◊ Only when all that is done, is it possible to make an authentic theological statement; when you speak of what you have learned, "Be attentive" to those to whom you are speaking, says Lonergan, for what you say will be taken up by them, and possibly by yourself, as the raw material for continued theological reflection.

As Christian communications speaks, it also listens. A theology of Christian communications that misses this point is, itself, hard of hearing.

b. Dimension 2: Christian communications emanates from and fosters community

Christian communications is not a private domain. It is an individual or collective articulation of the commonly held beliefs of a Christian community. When it plays back to the community that which the community believes, the community is either strengthened or divided. If it is divided, it is the duty of Christian communication to find threads of commonality. Christian communications theology recognizes the unifying role of Christian communications.

c. Dimension 3: Christian communications is the sharing of theological meaning

Christian communications, every time it speaks, proclaims some understanding of God. Authentic theology recognizes that Christian communications is not about merely human ecclesial personalities, places, phenomena, or events.

d. Dimension 4: Christian communications must take into account its historical and cultural context.

To be current and relevant, Christian communications theology must be finely in tune with its times. It must know the story and the language of the culture and subcultures from which it comes and in which it lives.

e. Dimension 5. Christian communications draws its "data" from history and, after having processed that data according to the eight steps, re-enters history and changes it.

The theology of Christian communications is not derived from textbooks and, once articulated, does not remain hidden away in textbooks. It emanates from all believing Christians and is offered to all.

f. Dimension 6: The source and culmination of Christian communications is divinely inspired love, brought about by individual conversion.

Christian communications theology understands that humans, including theologians and church authorities, are but media through whom God is revealed to the world. God's most effective media are those who are in love with him and with all he has created, including other humans.

Within a theological framework marked by these characteristics there would be plenty of room for individual, group, and institutional creativity. At the same time, the unity of the Christian community would be fostered and maintained

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: RAMIFICATIONS THE FOR CHURCH AND SOCIETY

What is being proposed is a not a *single* theology of Christian communications but, rather, a theological framework, a conceptual approach, that can be used over time by numerous people in a variety of situations. Therefore, one cannot enumerate with any certainty the many possible ramifications of this proposal for the Church and society. One can, at most, speculate on some potential outcomes if the framework were, indeed, to be accepted and put to widespread use.

It seems that the proposed six-dimensional theological framework for Christian communication would likely have no greater – and no less – an overall effect on the Church and society than other reforms brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The result would not be unanimity or a uniformity of Christian communications but, possibly, a new cohesion, harmony and vitality.

A few possible examples might help spur the imagination:

◊ Professional theologians would learn to be media gurus because they would be communicating not only with other theologians but with the whole world.

◊ Professional Christian communicators would get more respect because they would become true partners with theologians and bishops.

◊ Professional theologians and professional Christian communicators might feel threatened by the masses of people who would be involved in theological research, reflection and expression.

◊ Christian communications would come back to life and, once again, play a vital role in the society at large.

◊ Christian communications would change as the times change. And, at first glance, it would not be recognizable from one culture to the next.

◊ The assumptions and *a priori* prescriptive statements of *Aetatis Novae* and other official documents would be carefully evaluated.[194]

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[194]"An example of such a statement: "A pastoral plan for social communications should include the following elements: a) the statement of a vision, b) an inventory or assessment which describes the media environment in the territory under consideration, c) a proposed structure for Church-related social communications, d) media education, with special emphasis on the relationship of media and values, e) pastoral outreach to, and dialogue with, media professionals, f) means of obtaining and maintaining financial support." *Aetatis Novae. Dawn of New Era*, (Boston: St. Paul Books, 1999), p 23.

◊ Official statements, such as the following in *Ethics in Communications* regarding public participation in decisions on communications policy, might be taken more seriously: "At all levels, this participation should be organized, systematic, and genuinely representative, not skewed in favor of particular groups." This statement was meant to apply to *secular* media.

◊ Statements about Christian communications by Church officials, even at the highest levels, would be open to closer theological scrutiny.[195]

◊ The assumptions and relevance of the Church press and other media would be questioned.[196]

◊ Some of William F. Fore's views might get a closer look, especially those pertaining to personal conversion of those involved in the communications process and the role of the community in helping shape Christian communications theology.[197]

◊ The six-dimensional framework itself might be put to a reality test. One might ask if Lonergan's theological method is, indeed, a reflection of reality or if it is merely wishful thinking, merely utopian? For example, even Lonergan admits that many people involved in theological reflection don't get past the third step, history. They *avoid* dialectic. Is that true of Christian communicators, theologians and Church authorities?

◊ Another test could use the very method Lonergan proposes to look at the "data" of current attempts at formulating a theology of Christian communications, such as those cited in this paper, and explore whether, *taken together*, they constitute some sort of cohesive whole. After all, what is being proposed is a *framework* for theology, not an actual, self-contained theological system.

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[195] An example is this statement by Archbishop John P. Foley: "While I am very much in favor of all Catholic communications efforts, including radio and television, I have a special place in my heart for the Catholic Press – for its newspapers, magazines and books," the Archbishop said in a statement from Vatican City on September 3, 2001. It is not surprising that the Church's senior communications policy should feel a certain warmth towards the printed word since he used to be a newspaper editor and was speaking to mark Catholic Press Month.[195] But he said he likes print media because "The written words remain – *Scripta manent* is a maxim which reflects the wisdom of the ages ... The spoken word can have a great impact – but that word can often be forgotten and lost forever ... The written word, even the transcription of the spoken word, endures to inspire and to nourish us again and again."

[196] A past president of the Catholic Press Association, said: "Where else outside of church, will you or your family learn about the day's news, the week's political events, the world's crises through a faith perspective, other than the Catholic Press? . Media hype, consumer attitudes, secular philosophies and financial concerns bombard you and your family constantly each day through newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and the Internet. Catholic publications are one element you can bring into your home that will put 21st Century events into eternity's timeless perspective." *Mission, Marketing and Management*, Catholic Press Association, p 44

[197] For example: "The content of Christian communication is not a series of logical propositions, or wall charts with connected squares 'explaining' God's plan, or texts from the Bible committed to memory, or creed, or theological statements The content of Christian communication is essentially what God has done in the lives of individuals, including me ... Communication cannot be validated unless it is affirmed in and through the life of persons in community .. From a Christian's point of view, it is only through the resurgence of community that the individual can reconnect with God who is manifest in the process of participation and whose essence is relatedness, wholeness and harmony. Given the new technological era with its rapid growth of the means of mass communication, new forms of community will have be invented, identified, and constructed which take these media into account." Fore, Television and Religion, pp 38-54.

◊ Alternatively, the six dimensions of the proposed framework could be superimposed on each of the current attempts at formulating a theology of Christian communications (similarly to how the *Method* is used in Chapter 4), to sift out their weaknesses, inadequacies, and incompleteness. Within the proposed framework there can certainly be room for all, as long as the characteristics of the framework are respected. The framework can include every theological insight about Christian communications as long as, for instance, each proponent is willing to be in dialog, as in communion ecclesiology, with everyone else.

Finally, a personal note from the author of this thesis: If these or similar outcomes were to materialize, they would confirm the author's conviction expressed seven years ago in a term paper at the beginning of his enquiry into the theology of Christian communications that, "The most profound and fundamental aspect of human existence is not imparted by strategic plans. Faith is acquired by grace and expressed by the passionate impulses of the living, breathing, human heart. Ultimately, an authentic theological framework for Christian communications must take this reality into account."[198]

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[198] Richard Osicki, "Social communications and the ecclesiology of communion," University of Dayton, October 11, 1997.

APPENDIX 1

HOW, WHEN AND BY WHOM CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS IS PRACTISED

This appendix defines what is meant by Christian communications in the context of this thesis. It examines the interplay of content, form, participants and media in communications that is distinctly Christian.

1. CONTENT

When we say that Christian communications is, in fact, aspects of the Christian faith being communicated by members of the Church among themselves and with others, what are we saying?

In the broadest sense, we are saying that Christian communications is an activity that transmits and exchanges theological meaning. Further, we are suggesting that this activity can happen in either of three ways. That is, Christian communications can be:

1. *about* the Christian faith
2. from the *perspective* of the faith, or
3. communication of the *faith itself.*

In other words, three distinct and progressively deeper levels of content can be communicated, each imparting a different range of theological meaning.

Communication *about* the Christian faith, for instance, is usually an attempt at an objective exercise:[199] reporting facts, events, doctrines, policies, moral viewpoints, and the like. It is akin to journalism and non-fiction books. It can be done by anybody, atheists included, who has adequate access to the required information and has been trained in one or another craft of communication. Most church newspapers and magazines, for example, would fall into this category. Their goal is simply to convey information.

In communicating from the *perspective of faith*, one might not mention anything at all about God or other explicit articles of faith ... Even the subject matter night not be overtly religious. For example, one might construct a television documentary opposing the death penalty, or opposing abortion, or decrying the state of the poor, from a Christian perspective but without once mentioning God or the Bible. This form of communication, by definition, requires that the communicator know and understand Christian beliefs. Its goals, however, are limited to commentary on specific issues or events. It is an intellectual exercise. At best, the individual recipient of the communication emerges with a new, strengthened or broadened appreciation or understanding of the subject at hand.

Communicating the faith *itself* is the most complex, problematic, and mysterious of the three. It entails entering into a relationship in which a person's or a group's beliefs are shared with others. It begins and ends, not just with a new, altered or enhanced understanding of a subject, but with a change of heart. It is what results in what the Church calls evangelization and conversion, or Bernard Lonergan calls "insight"[200], or Marshall McLuhan and Pierre Babin call "extension."[201]

Obviously, to communicate faith itself one needs to be an authentic and open believer. This kind of communication cannot be faked. It is an act not of the mind but of the heart. It is the kind of communication we see from saints, from effective spiritual leaders, from Mother Teresa and, when he is at his most charismatic and mystical, from Pope John Paul II.

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[199] Modern communications theory holds that true objectivity is impossible. Nonetheless, in some instances it is maintained as a goal.

[200] Morelli and Morelli, The Lonergan Reader, pp. 47-51.

[201] Quentin Fiore and Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects (Toronto, Bantam, undated), p 26

Unfortunately, these three distinct levels of Christian communications are almost always confused by communications practitioners, commentators, critics, managers, academics, and the Church's official document writers. Yet, obviously, each of these levels has its own prerequisites, methods and effects. Each is also driven by a different part of the Church's mission. Each, therefore, has its own theological roots, sources of sustenance, and ramifications.

2. FORM

The form of communications has three dimensions:

1. the *directions* in which messages travel
2. the *languages* that are used to convey information or meaning, and
3. the *technologies* that transport linguistic symbols from one place to another

Each of these, as they apply to Christian communications, will now be touched on in turn.

a. Directions

Historically, and until today, Christian communications has followed four directional patterns:

1. One way
2. Two way
3. Multidirectional/omnidirectional
4. Dialogic.

At times, and under certain circumstances, two or more directional patterns have been or are being deployed at the same time.

i. One way Communication

The most common example of one-way communication in the Church is homiletics, or preaching. One person, usually a man, stands in front of a group of people, usually at an elevation from which he can bee seen, and speaks. The flow of information or the interpretation of meaning is almost exclusively one way. Although some homelists or preachers claim to be able to "read" their audiences and to tailor their presentations accordingly, the normal pattern is for the priest or other minister to prepare and proclaim, and for the congregants to listen and reflect. Hierarchically, the communicator is seen to be superior to the listeners.

This pattern of Christian communication was begun by Jesus Christ himself, based on the antecedents of his biblical predecessors. Examples of its extension in modern times include TV evangelism, papal speeches, documents issued from the magisterium, lectures, and a myriad of books, audiotapes, videotapes, CDs, newspapers, and magazines. Even most Internet web sites, including the Vatican's, follow this one-way pattern of communication.

ii. Two-way communication

Letters to the editor, if they are in fact read and taken seriously by the editor of a publication, are a form of two-way communication. So, too, are the spontaneous vocal responses ("Amen! Amen!") of congregants in some Protestant churches. In a Catholic setting, going up to the homilist after Mass to comment on his homily obviously fits this pattern.

This two-way pattern, too, has biblical roots. Jesus, after all, took questions and answered them.

Yet this pattern still assumes a major hierarchical distinction between the initiator of the communication – the speaker, author, etc. – and the audience. Hierarchically, the initiator has precedence, for it is she or he who gets the process going, who manages it, who terminates it at will, and who gauges its results.

iii. Multidirectional and omnidirectional communication

The invention of the printing press made it possible to scatter communications in many directions. It decentralized the production and consumption of messages. It set the stage for an exponentially larger number of communicators, authors. And, authors could also become prolific readers.

Since that time the communication of messages to large indeterminate groups of people (multi-directional) or to no one in particular (omnidirectional) have become commonplace. This pattern of communication ascended to great heights with the invention of electronic broadcasting (radio and television) to the extent that, in the late 1950s, it gave rise to the term, "mass media."

The church pioneered the use of both the printing press (the Gutenberg bible) and the electronic media. Examples of the latter include Marconi's establishment of Vatican Radio under the authority of Pope XI in the 1920s, the controversial but popular programs of Fr. Coughlin in the 1920s and 1930s, and the rise of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen as one of America's earliest television stars. However, for a complexity of reasons, and with a few notable exceptions, the Church has essentially lost or abandoned its presence in this multidirectional/omnidirectional pattern of communication over the past several decades.

iv. Dialogic communication

Dialogic communication occurs when two or more people are, for the purposes of communication, on an equal footing. Either party begins the process by sharing when he or she knows or believes. The other party listens and responds, partly reacting to what the first party has postulated, and partly also putting forward his or her knowledge and/or beliefs. The first party then becomes listener and respondent, and so on. Thus, a conversation ensues and, if the sharing is authentic, both parties are changed by it.

This form of Christian communication has gradually but slightly become more commonplace since Vatican II. In fact, it can be shown that it is precisely this form of Christian communications that the Council intended to introduce and promote, although it did not manage to say so explicitly in *Inter mirifica*, the Decree on Social Communications, but, rather, implicitly in its other major documents.[202]

The movement of the Church over the centuries from an emphasis on one-on-one communication, through the other directional forms, through to dialogic communication has been slow, cautious and arduous, largely because the stakes are high. To move erroneously from one directional form to another can have severe theological consequences, i.e., the spreading of false doctrine, and massive organizational consequences, i.e., a realignment and redistribution of ecclesial power.

Thus, to date dialogic communication is practised in the Church only sparingly, under tightly controlled circumstances, and in small groups. Official ecumenical and inter-religious dialogs, and parish- or school-based faith-sharing groups, are two examples of this dialogic form of Christian communication

b. Languages

This paper is not the place to expound on what is known and theorized about the subject of linguistics and how humans use symbols to convey information and meaning. It is sufficient here to say that in Christian communications the linguistic symbols fall into three broad categories: words, sounds and visual images.

Simply put, in the Christian context:

◊ words are spoken (sermons, audiotapes), written (books and bulletin boards) and sung (hymns and Christian pop music); conversely, they are heard and read

◊ sounds are produced naturally, as by the human voice (choirs), or artificially such as by musical instruments or church bells

◊ images take a myriad of forms, from gestures of the human body (the sign of the cross), to the figures used in drawings and paintings (saints and crucifixes) and photographs (bishops and orphans), to the shapes (rectangular, triangular, round) and textures (soft, harsh, neural) given to places of worship.

All of these sets of linguistic symbols are used in various combinations, at various times and in various places, to convey the three levels of content of Christian communications.

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[202] Examples include: *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church; *Unitatis redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism; *Nostra aetate*, the Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions; *Apostolicam actuositatem*, the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People; *Ad gentes divinitus*, the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity; and, *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

c. Technologies

Technology is defined in this instance as the physical means by which human communication takes place.

McLuhan and Babin assert that the primal technology is the human body. Our arms, fingers, feet, ears, eyes, noses, vocal cords, are all God-given mechanisms by which we can make contact, communicate with, other human beings and with the rest of the world in which we live. McLuhan and Babin would further argue that all synthetic communications technologies, that is, one invented by humans, are merely extensions of these basic bodily mechanisms. Both scholars insist, therefore, that any understanding about nature and use of the synthetic mechanisms must take into full account their intrinsic relationship to the human body.

Theoretically, at least, that assertion has massive implications, which are explored in the conclusion to this thesis.

Regardless, even the casual observer will notice that the technology of communications, and even of Christian communications, has been changing dramatically throughout the course of history. In the beginning, however, the change was gradual – the evolution from grunts and cave drawings to systematic speech and written language took millions of years. The evolution to mechanized, mass produced communications in the form of printing presses took several thousands of years. The jump from the printing press to photography, the telegraph and radio took only a few hundred years. And, the technological evolution from Compact Discs (CDs) to purely electronic digital recording methods such as MP3 took less than a decade.

There is little wonder then, that the Church, an arduously large and necessarily cautious entity, should be noticeably absent from the forefront of change in communications technology. For the most part, the church is lagging behind the evolution in communications technology by about a hundred years. Certainly there are exceptions, such as the pioneering presence of the Vatican curia on the Internet, or the slick music CDs produced by such groups as the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecelia in Nashville, TN, but these are not the rule. Much more common are the technologies underlying the traditional media described in Section 4 of the appendix, Media.

d. Interdependencies

Naturally, the three dimensions that constitute the form of Christian communications are tightly interlinked. In the same way that the dimensions of a physical object are merely ways of describing and quantifying the same object, so, too, the three dimensions of communications cannot be segregated from each other. Just as a piece of rope cannot have length unless it also has diameter and weight, so the form of communications cannot have a direction or language unless it also has a technology.

In fact, the three dimensions are fully dependent on each other. One cannot send a symbolic image in many directions, for instance, unless one also has a technology that is capable of the task. It is imperative, therefore, that when one considers the form of Christian communications one carefully scrutinizes the characteristics of each of the three dimensions. This point may seem self-evident, yet rarely in a theological or pastoral discussion of communications is attention paid to technology. In fact, rarely is even the form of communication acknowledged and analyzed. Most often, the focus is merely on aspects of content, not recognizing the crucial role both of the form and of the "players."

3. PARTICIPANTS

For the purpose of this paper those who participate in the process of Christian communications are referred to as the "players." An older and more common terminology included the terms "sender" and "receiver," or alternately, "producer" and "consumer," or "author" and "audience." Each of these traditional terms is inadequate, however, if one considers the entire range of Christian communications content, forms and media that are today being deployed. As will become evident, it is somewhat artificial, and misleading, to partition the range of groups and individuals who participate in Christian communications processes into those who "send" and those who "receive" information or meaning.

a. Partial list: no survey, no inventory

Nobody has a list of the numerous players in Christian communications, within the Catholic Church or elsewhere. Nobody has an inventory of individuals, groups and institutions that generate messages or receive them. There are not even any estimates; not national, local or universal.

The Catholic Church has an elaborate method of collecting statistics on the precise number of churches, schools, hospitals, priests, religious sisters and brothers, seminarians, and missionaries. It even has a good idea of how many people belong to parishes and regularly attend church on Sundays. But nobody knows how many Catholic newspapers there are, how many magazines, books, and radio and television programs. Nobody knows how many people consider themselves to be Christian architects or filmmakers or musicians. Nobody has even compiled a comprehensive bibliography of academic or popular writing on the subject of Christian communications.

All quantification of Christian communications, therefore, is anecdotal, no more than a guess, for several reasons.

1. There is the question of definition. The is not a universal consensus on what constitutes Christian communications in terms of content, form, players or media
2. There is no central body, or collection of regional bodies, charged with collecting communications data.
3. The academic study of Christian communications is in its infancy; at best, it is scattered, sporadic, and inconsistent. No scholars have yet conducted surveys to collect baseline data that would help measure the state and development of Christian communications around the world
4. Communications is not part of the theological, administrative or pastoral mainstream of the Catholic Church and or of almost any other Christian Church.

On the surface, this lack of information may seem entirely bleak. If communications is, indeed, an essential aspect of Christian life, why does nobody seem to have a handle on it? The answer may be that to collect the data would be impossible, no easier than keeping track of how many Christians lead good lives and are likely to get to heaven. This answer may lie squarely in the ubiquitous nature of Christian communications, as evidenced, in part, but the vast number of players.

b. Senders

i. Who are they?

Who is it that sends and receives Christian messages? There is no simple answer.

Many academics and communications commentators, for instance, refer to people "inside" the Church communicating to others, who are either "inside" or "outside." But, if this is the case, where are the boundaries? Where does one draw a line between those who are "inside" and those who are not? For most intents and purposes, a bishop and his communications officer would be considered to be "insiders." But how about the owner of a small Christian publishing house, especially one that consistently challenges one or another aspect of Church teaching or authority? And, further still, how about someone whom one would perhaps not identify with the Church at all, such as the pop singers Madonna and Sinead O'Connor, or filmmakers Susan Sarandon and Mel Gibson? Are they not also Christian communicators?

All the above pertains to those who are considered or consider themselves to be Christian. However, how about non-Christians who communicate about the Christian faith, or even from the perspective of the faith? An example might be *Time* magazine or, in Canada, the *National Post*, which often present a Catholic perspective on world events. Or what about *Bigger than Jesus*, a popular theatrical play written from a Catholic perspective, by a non-Christian and avowed agnostic? None of these is usually viewed as a church "insider."

ii. Holy See

#One of the most visible players in the communications of the Catholic Church is the Holy See. It operates, among others: an international newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*; one of the world's largest radio networks, *Vatican Radio*; a television production and distribution organization, *Vatican Television*; two Internet news services, *Vatican Information Service* and *Zenit*; and, one of the world's most sophisticated media relations organizations, the *Vatican Press Office*. Interestingly, and contrary to

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expectations, these long-established producers of Christian communications are not under one roof either organizationally or administratively, and are not guided by any one set of editorial policies.[203]

iii. Episcopal Conferences and others

Lower down the Catholic hierarchical structure are the communications activities of, on hand, the Church's continental, national and regional episcopal conferences and, on the other, of religious orders and international lay apostolates such as the Knights of Columbus and Caritas International. The amount, quality, frequency, style of communications generated at this level has never been formally studied but would vary substantially from one situation to another.

At this level, too, are the international organizations that encourage and promote Christian communications. Examples include SIGNIS, the world organization for communications (primarily, film, video, radio and television), the Catholic Press Union, the World Association for Christian Communications, and their continental and national counterparts.

iv. Diocesan level

Closer to ground level are the communications activities of archdioceses and dioceses. Again, though no extensive studies have been conducted[204], there is evidence to suggest that the communications activities in dioceses around the world range from none to plenty; from amateurish to slick; and in forms ranging from diocesan public relations offices, to multipurpose web sites, to the ownership and operation of television stations and radio networks.

v. On the ground

Although all parishes and congregations communicate in one way or another, some do so more deliberately, elaborately and profusely than others. For some, communications consists of a bulletin board at the entrance to the church and, perhaps, a Sunday bulletin. For others, it involves the broadcasting of a weekly Mass on radio or television or the Internet. For others still, it includes a parish brochure or newspaper advertisements.

At this local level, there is a also scattering of communications activities by religious communities, seminaries, and service organizations, which, for example, may produce and distribute videotapes about their history and objectives.

Much more prevalent but also most often excluded from academic and official considerations of Christian communications are the communications programs of Christian educational institutions: schools, colleges, universities, and others. Around the world there must be tens of thousands of these programs, although none are catalogued.

The same is true for the often financially well-endowed and extensive communications programs of Christian health care institutions: hospitals, long-term care homes, and seniors' residences, for example.

Also at ground level, are the communications activities of countless Christian social and service agencies: cemeteries, pro-life and social justice groups, drop-in shelters, and charitable foundations, to name but a few. Each of these is, to a greater or lesser extent, a producer of Christian communications.

vi. Down to one

Finally, there is the individual. Christian or not, there is the lone man or woman who writes books or articles, letters to the editor, or scripts for theatrical plays. This person may create stained glass windows for church buildings, paint imaginary images of the face of Jesus or the saints, or participate in street demonstrations for or against a certain cause. This person, too, is a Christian communicator, but almost never recognized as such by those who profess an interest in this subject.

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[203] The author of this thesis spent July 1999 in Rome and the Vatican conducting interviews with 19 officials who have responsibility for teaching, implementation, and/or creating global policy for Catholic social communications. Interviewees included the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the Director of the Vatican Press Office, and the Director of Vatican Radio.

[204] From an interview with Angela Ann Zukowski at the opening congress of SIGNIS in November 2001 in Rome.

c. Receivers

It is no less difficult to name and count the "receivers" of Christian communications as it is to identify the "senders."

i. Who is on the "outside"?

It is a common error among those who believe that Christian communications ought to be planned and executed according to hierarchical, institutional models to identify "target audiences" as being either "internal" or "external." That is, those who are considered members of the Church are seen to be an "internal" audience, people more or less "in the know." In contrast, are the "outsiders": depending on time, circumstance and place, these are seen as either fallen away Catholics, or other Christians, or adherents of other religions, or agnostics and atheists, or indifferent secularists.

The assumption is that specific programs and messages ought to be crafted for each of these groups, and that the methods of delivery ought to be selected accordingly. Thus, one uses a Catholic or other Christian newspaper to preach to the converted and one uses the myriad techniques of media relations to reach those who don't read these newspapers, because they are "out there."

The problem with this assumption is that people are not so easily segregated, and usually not static (they do not remain in one place for all time). The editor of the city newspaper may be a parishioner in one of the local parishes. The aggressive, muck-raking journalist may, on Sundays, be a Eucharistic minister. The Presbyterian or the Jew may, because of intermarriage or the particular course of a personal faith journey, may have children who attend a Catholic school or parish catechetical classes. A young adult may drift in and out of a pattern of church attendance for many years.

ii. Attendees and non-attendees

Even among churchgoers there is no way of assuming or measuring homogeneity. The person who sits in the first pew every Sunday may be an atheist. The one who attends church only occasionally may be unable to attend every week because of family or employment obligations. Either individual may or may not be a recipient of Christian communications material.

Conversely, Christians who are not considered churchgoers are not necessarily isolated from the effects of Christian communications. If they are "merely cultural Catholics" or "nominal Christians," they still might watch a Catholic television program because they identify with some part of its content. Or, they might inadvertently come across a Christian magazine at the back of a church while attending a funeral, baptism or wedding.

iii. Non-Catholics

Of course, among non-Catholics, there is an infinite variety of "types" of people, ranging from Anglicans and Episcopalians who might wish they were Catholic, to adherents of other religions who hold Christian beliefs in either admiration or disdain. Long gone, at least since Vatican II, are the days when there were "Catholics and others," "Christians and others," those who would attain salvation and those who are damned. Christian communications, therefore, if it is to take into account both contemporary theology and reality, cannot earnestly and honestly take the stance of "us" communicating to or with "them" Not all who are not with us are against us, just as not all who are with us are for us.

d. Blurred distinctions

At this point we can see the point made earlier (*Directions*) that the lines of distinction between the sender and receiver of Christian communications are difficult, if not impossible, to draw. Even in one-way communication, but especially in multidirectional, omnidirectional or dialogic communication, the sender and receiver are often one and the same. This creates challenges for establishing suitable models of communications for the Church and especially for laying the foundations of a theology of Christian communications, especially if one adds to the mix, the final ingredient, the many forms of communications media.

4. MEDIA

As the content, form and players in Christian communicators are hard to define and to delineate, so, too, are the media of Christian communications an ever-shifting landscape of millions of grains of sand. Even at the time of Jesus, long before the emergence of communications theory, there was a wide choice of communications media for the Christian communicator. One could speak on a hillside, in a temple, from the side of a boat, or at a wedding. One could use words, gestures, images or written words. One could write on parchment, wood or stone.

All those media still exist today, but they have been joined by the technological marvels generated by two thousand years of human ingenuity. The variety of media available to Christian communications today is so vast and so rapidly changing that it would require an enormous tome to list them, and much debate to define and categorize them. And, at the moment the list would be compiled, it would be out of date.

What follows, then, is an extremely limited grouping of some of the more commonly used communications media of the day. The groupings overlap and are not all-inclusive. The intent here is not to be exhaustive but, rather, to bring to mind the array of choices by which the content of Christian communications can be delivered.

a. More or less traditional mass and group media

Communications media that have been in use for at least several decades include[205]:

◊ **Audiotapes** – containing words, songs, and/or sounds
◊ **Books** – hardcover or softcover; in many shapes, textures and sizes
◊ **Magazines** – mass circulation, targeted circulation to special interest groups; on newsprint or glossy, plasticized paper
◊ **Movies** (film) – documentary and feature; from family friendly Super 8 and digital family cameras, to million-dollar units that need to be transported by truck; from home projection screens to IMAX movie theaters; from local art– cinemas to megaplexes equipped with cushioned reclining seats and 72-speaker surround sound
◊ **Newspapers** – local, national, and international; owned by individuals and multinational corporations; through satellite transmission, created and distributed in many cities simultaneously
◊ **Paintings** – oil, acrylic, charcoal; on canvases, ceilings and brick exteriors of buildings
◊ **Radio** – AM, FM and shortwave; live and pre-recorded programs; stand alone or interlinked through networks; formats varying from wall-to-wall music to teaching and preaching
◊ **Still photography** – from disposable cameras to cameras that magnify images hundred of times; film sensitivity for bright sunlight light or barely any light at all
◊ **Television** – thousands of channels available through line-of sight transmission, cable, satellite and the Internet; live input from anywhere in the world; viewing in homes, cars, bars, on boats and planes, and even in places where there is no electricity
◊ **Videotapes** – self produced, or rented or purchased with content already added; new and used; available by mail, in grocery stores, in neighborhood video rental stores or downloaded off the Internet.

b. Media based on new technologies

Communications media based on recent technologies, the so-called "new media" include but are not limited to:

◊ **CDs** self-made, or bought with content included; one-way, interactive or linked with other new media such as the Internet
◊ **Computers** – rarely stand-alone, increasingly networked; hardware and software being conjoined; available with an exploding array of application programs (from multimedia PowerPoint, to games

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[205] This list, as the others that follow, is in alphabetical order, in order to avoid evaluation, judgment or ranking of any of the media.

with participants around the world, to home movie making), and peripheral devices (webcams, memory sticks, and photo printers)

◊ **Digital film or audiovisual** – film industry systems that enable a movie to be "shot" entirely in computers and peripherals; home systems that enable amateurs and hobbyists to combine images captured on low cost digital cameras, with still and moving pictures collected electronically, and for free, from around the world

◊ **Digital photography** – no statistics yet available on how many more pictures people are now taking, and giving to others, because the cost of digital photography does not, as with conventional photography, increase directly in proportion to the number of shots taken; every home or office with a computer instantaneously becomes a potential digital photo lab so that pictures can be cropped, enlarged, altered and combined

◊ **Digital sound** – the leading edge sound technology of the movie theatre has entered the home; a perfectly recorded symphonic performance can be downloaded from the Internet and played on a living room sound surround system; sound can be digitally compressed so that a digital player the size of slice of bread can store thousands of songs, or soundscapes, conversations, speeches, or homilies.

◊ **DVDs** – again, self made or mass-produced; packed with feature films, documentaries, multimedia encyclopedias, games, golf or cooking lessons, pornography, or illustrated biblical narratives

◊ **Internet** – still in its infancy and with the potential to link every human on earth with every other, in real time or asynchronously; the town square of the global village, where all information and knowledge come together in one publicly accessible place.

c. Media used for Christian communications

Media used frequently but not always evidently for Christian communications include:

◊ **Church buildings** – where a church building is located, what surrounds it, its architectural characteristics, the interior layout and decor, all communicate about faith, from the perspective of faith, or faith itself.

◊ **Devotional items** – a process of message transmittal and response can occur if there is a permanent baptismal font at the entrance to a church, if someone visibly carries a rosary in her purse, someone hangs a crucifix by the kitchen table, or attaches a plastic image of a saint to the dashboard of a car

◊ **Homilies** – those who study homiletics know well that a homily can be delivered "about scripture" (an intellectual exercise, communicating about faith) or "with the authority of scripture" (from the converted heart, communicating the faith itself).

◊ **Liturgical music and dance** – at their best, liturgical music and dance express and reinforce the faith of the gathered community; at their worst they are mere artistic expressions, perhaps even professionally produced by outsiders to the community, in which case they are but a spectacle that takes place alongside and in parallel with the act of worship, but not as an authentic and integral part of it; often, in such instances, what they communicate conflicts with what is being communicated by ambient media

◊ **Liturgical sights, sounds and smells** – there is almost everything yet to be learned about the communicative efficacy of sunlight shining into a church through a stained glass window; or the bells that are rung to signal the moment of transubstantiation, or the wafting smell of incense during the commendation of a body at a funeral

◊ **Painting and sculpture** – it is likely that no sociologist has yet attempted to understand the effect of removing, since Vatican II, the many paintings and statues that used to form the visual ambiance in churches, school entrances and hallways, and church basements; nor has anyone begun to track the gradual, often unnoticed, return of these artifacts to some locations; and, the overt and covert religious themes portrayed by the fine art in museums and other collections is a field study unto itself

◊ **Parish bulletins** – their technology has evolved from the days of the Gestetner machine, through the advent of photocopying, to today's full-colour desktop publishing methods; nobody has

surveyed how the content or the readership of this medium of Christian communications may have changed over the decades

◊ **Screens and projectors** - in the 1960s many parishes put up projection screens off to the side of the altar so that the lyrics of the vernacular songs that now had to be learned could be seen by all those in attendance; many of those same screens are still there thirty years later; in some churches, they have been replaced by digital projectors and mechanical screens that are lowered into position at appropriate moments

◊ **Sound systems** – even the smallest, poorest churches have usually have a microphone, amplifier and speakers; not too many church buildings have been equipped with Dolby sound surround systems yet, but some have installed acoustically engineered sound systems that can deliver live or recorded music and multi-micophoned liturgies, creating intimacy between the person leading the liturgical event and those participating in it[206]

◊ **Vestments and habits** – Over the past three generations, the airline industry and military have continuously and systematically adapted their uniforms to changing values, fashions and available materials; the Church, on the other hand has been much more erratic in this regard, in some cases, as with certain communities of women religious, doing away with uniforms (habits) altogether and, in the case of liturgical vestments, changing very little; not all change is for communications purposes (some, obviously is for functional reasons), but the way clergy and the members of religious orders appear visually continues to have a yet unmeasured effect on Christian communications[207]

5. ALL BLENDING, CONVERGING, MYSTERIOUSLY

This abridged listing of how, when and by whom Christian communications is practised is hardly exhaustive. The purpose, as stated at the beginning, has been to illustrate the nearly infinite number of instances in which Christians and, often inadvertently non-Christians, communicate God's Word, participate in evangelization.

It is not a neat and tidy list, nor is the situation it describes. The situation is indeed as complex, dynamic and, perhaps, as mysterious as the Church itself. And it raises many questions. Where in all this communications activity, for instance, is there any overt or covert theological meaning? Can one spot it? Can one identify and measure it? Can the Church make it happen or does it happen on its own? Most importantly, for our purposes, is what drives all this activity? What theology, if any, justifies it or causes it to happen?

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[206] McLuhan contends it was the invention of microphones, more than theology, that led to Vatican II's liturgical changes

[207] The author of this thesis observed at the Continental Congress for Vocations in Montreal in April 2002 that the religious orders who continue to wear habits do not seem to be as hard hit by the "vocations crisis," as others. Obviously, it would be easy to dismiss the style of dress as much less relevant than the ideological stance and other defining characteristics of a particular community. However, in this situation and in others, there is likely a reflexive, symbiotic relationship between how a group looks and what it, in fact, is. The way we dress both reflects and partially determines who we are.

APPENDIX 2

REFERENCE TEXTS

This appendix contains excerpts from speeches and texts cited in Chapter 5.

1. BABIN'S SPEECH TO CANADIAN BISHOPS

Following are excerpts from Pierre Babin's address to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in October 1999.

I am here, in part, because of an illustrious Canadian who profoundly changed my life as a priest and a catechist. The Canadian was Marshall McLuhan, a man who has been called a "prophet of the media."

It was Marshall McLuhan who secretly inspired that famous passage in Redemptoris Missio which I would like to speak to today: "It is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications." (RM 37)

My reflections and convictions are based on McLuhan's fundamental thesis which states that the major causes of change in cultures and civilizations are not ideologies, wars or religions, but rather new communications technologies that structure societies. When a new communications technology is created, society finds itself restructured by it, as does the Church. Yesterday, it was the printing press, today it is electronics. ...

Electronic culture is about to invade the entire world at a speed yet unmatched in history. As McLuhan said, "I am not pessimistic, I am apocalyptic!"

Consequently, I believe that we must radically rethink our pastoral methods, in the same way as the revolution which occurred as a result of the discovery of print technology and culminated in the Council of Trent. We have been invited not to a superficial restructuring of methods but rather to what has been termed a change in the priorities and paradigms of pastoral work. We must do with electronic media what Luther and Canisius did in their time with the printing press when they invented the catechism, seminaries, etc.

This is a new model which is little by little establishing itself, affecting what Sister Angela Zukowski, Director of Social Communications for the Diocese of Dayton (sic), calls "new ways of being Church." The Spirit is moving us toward this change: do we not already see the signs? ...

Of course, this transition may seem difficult. I recall the words of Cardinal Stephen Kim, Archbishop of Seoul, who confided this to me about modern culture: "It is another culture ... I am not prepared for it. I cannot perceive it. I have no intuition what should be done ... It will require young people ...

In the past, teaching came from authority which saw to it that the truth was passed on. Today, the dominant model is commercial ... The term "commerce" is taken here in its fundamental sense: an exchange of goods after bargaining (negotiation). It includes the following:

1. A central focus on goods, not on truth, but what I perceive as good for me ... people unconsciously become interested in the Church only to the extent it provides them something: health, social status, personal growth, fulfillment in a personal spiritual search.

2. An emphasis on choice and negotiation through communication. This is what Kierkegaard called "the dictatorship of the audience." People want to choose, experiment and have guarantees ...

3. The power of the audience to judge the value of goods. The public, not an authority of some kind, judges whether or not a given product is good for it.

Such is the communications world in this new culture ... Evangelization must first of all present faith in terms of goods – salvation, healing – rather than in terms of truth. The mission of Christian radio must not be to teach Christian doctrine, but to give joy and reinforce personal identity. Televised Mass must make viewers feel alive and make them happy before provoking reflection or to teach doctrine.

... Whereas the communicator previously used media or various communications tools to relay a particular message to an audience, today the communicator and the audience become part of the medium. We no longer use the media. Instead, we become a medium for transmitting goods by communing with the audience, by becoming "a single entity" with people, whether they are good or bad.

... After the discovery of print technologies, pastoral initiatives and missionary work centered on transmitting the doctrina christiana. In the contemporary context of the media, pastoral work needs to focus on networks, communities of affinity, electronic relationships and "chatting" on the Internet. Evangelization has to be redefined in terms of conversation or dialogue. We must move away from proclamation and toward conversation (according to the deepest meaning of conversation – "to keep company with"), away from the exigencies of conversion and toward a call to friendship. To evangelize is to make friends and invite them to the wedding feast (Mt 22, 14).

Another important element is the shift from the predominance of words to the predominance of a language of symbols, modulation, and - using the English word - ground. At one time in educational culture, the dominant language consisted of words, books, clear ideas and doctrines. Today, according to rigorous scientific studies, words no longer carry the same weight. For example, when a person delivers a message on television, words account for only seven per cent of the impression left on the viewers. The rhythm of speech accounts for 38 per cent and body language for 55 per cent. Thus, in modern language we can say that "communicating is transmitting vibrations (or modulations) in a setting which has been prepared for this purpose (composition, background, or 'ground')."

Modulation is the energy that emanates from one body toward another. It is the way in which bodies communicate through an exchange of vibrations. Consequently, we must now reassert the value of the fundamental languages of modulation and atmosphere: the voice that is behind the words, images and parabolic language, lighting, music and songs, sound quality, microphones and speakers, rhythm and gestures. Women will naturally reclaim an important place in our churches because, more so than men, they have a genius for this language of ground and modulation. The culture of the media will by its nature mean new feminine influence.

The church is no longer the central building of the village. Office towers and large hotels have long ago taken its place. We must ask ourselves why children would come to church to follow the teachings of Christ? How would it be possible for faith after childhood to remain unaffected by so many influences and so much agitation? One cannot be solid in the faith unless it corresponds to a personal interior awakening. The key to religious communication is relating the language of the Gospel to the progressive awakening of one's inner self.

During a recent visit to Bangkok, I was surprised to read the following in bold print in the Bangkok Post: "Globalization is about to wash over the world by catapulting each member of the human race into the new millennium. To prepare for the future, we must understand the changes that are imminent and personally prepare ourselves."

We are participants at a major time in the history of humanity. ... It is not a matter of abandoning what in the past was a focus on the pastoral mission (enculturation). However, as disciples of the Bible, we must go about making enculturation not the goal but the path to globalization according to the Gospel. By means of religious education, the liturgy, position statements, newspapers and media, we must clearly declare that we are citizens of a country and at the same time children of the whole world: "The entire world is my family" (Pope John XXIII).

At a certain time in its history, the Church declared itself a social defender of the exploited and the working class. It must now acquire the image and leadership needed to bring about globalization according to the Gospel. Getting into globalization, like getting into the world of media, implies that we give up having the monopoly on truth and religion ...

... Because the current change is so radical, I can foresee that as bishops you will bear a heavy burden. I humbly offer my observations, and invite you to try to relate my remarks to your situation, given that I am not Canadian.

2. BABIN'S BOOK: THE NEW ERA IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATIONS

This is a summary of the main characteristics of the "Symbolic Way," a principle concept of Pierre Babin's The New Era in Religious Communication, published in 1991.

a. It is an extension of modern electronic technology

◊ "Historically, human behavior and, therefore, human institutions, including the Church, have been substantively determined by the emergence of new technologies."

◊ "The introduction of electronic media has changed the meaning of all of our cultural institutions and every aspect of our structures of thought, including changes to both religious institutions and theological concepts."

◊ "The catechism was not just a new technique or method followed with the aim of strengthening the teaching given in the Middle Ages. On the contrary, it was something quite different: a new way of teaching and learning, but also a change in the structure of communication. ... The most important results ... were a strictness in doctrine and a uniformity in knowledge ... One day we woke up to the fact that, for the majority of people, the living reality of faith had fled. The beautiful buildings were still there, but the mystery had left them. There were nothing but empty ... rules and formulas."

◊ "The rapid penetration of the media and human studies into all areas of life ... has led to the rapid destructuring of faith's intellectual foundations. The language of this new era is not the printed word but audiovisual media ... The pope makes himself present everywhere by means of television. Ecclesial unity is established by his image and his voice rather than by the words he utters," so that gradually papal letters and encyclicals have been playing a progressively lesser role.

b. It is a language of symbols

◊ "There is an urgent need for a new spirit of communication, new methods, a new course ... " That new course is one that Babin call *stereo catechesis*, a way of communicating faith from and to both hemispheres of the brain. It is a way of "mixing" traditional methods of communications, which are mainly linear and intellectual, with modern methods, which tend to be "symbolic and affective."

◊ "Use symbolic language ... That was Jesus' language, and it is the dominant language of the media today. It adds modulation to abstract words."

◊ "The archetypes of the unconscious (Carl Jung's) are empirically demonstrable parallels of religious dogmas ... The symbolic way ... is the best way of joining the archetype to its dogmatic counterpart ... It leads not only the spirit, but also the heart; it moves the body. It is a language full of resonances and rhythms, stories and images, and suggestions and connections, which introduces us to a different kind of mental and emotional behavior."

◊ "Under the audiovisual influence faith is perceived mainly by the right hemisphere (of the brain), in a symbolic, emotional, intuitive, global, artistic, and creative manner." In this audiovisual context, faith is conveyed not so much by words – written or spoken – but by images and sounds.

◊ "These symbolic, affective methods of arousing spiritual awareness are a necessary prerequisite for and complement to the more traditional methods of communicating the Christian faith."

c. It is a very physical language of vibration/modulation

◊ Babin defines the *symbolic way* as "fundamentally a complex and ambiguous whole of sounds, images, words and gestures, relationships, rhythms, scents, and many other factors that bring about a physical conditioning and a psychic emotion, both of which help the deepest demands made by the person and his or her religious archetypes to be awakened."

◊ "We are living not so much in a civilization of the image as in one of vibration. Vibration conditions the ear much more than the eye. The dominant sense, therefore, is hearing, as is evident from the behavior of young people with their Walkmans, and from pop music, rock, and the predominance of rock concerts and clubs ... They can no longer understand, or pray, without being physically moved. Once again, we see the predominance of the ear and therefore a return to a type of oral culture."

◊ "The special characteristic of the symbol, the image and sound is that it produces effects that are not so much normative and cerebral as emotional and even physical." Therefore, Babin concludes, "the final stage of the *symbolic way* makes the word intervene – a word that is not artificial but is produced by seeking in the Bible or looking for analogies in the lives of saints."

◊ " ... The characteristic of the language of the media is not to illustrate ideas but to provide an experience."

◊ "The person whose ear is the dominant organ ... will acquire a perception that is more receptive and exploratory with regard to realities. This person will not dominate realities, but let them penetrate himself or herself, and will not be above but 'in' ... Understanding by way of hearing is, in fact, being inside a reality, whereas understanding by means of reading is being above it."

◊ "In audiovisual language, the message is the global effect produced on the recipient." For this reason, "Contrary to appearances, the ground is the most important aspect in the audiovisual language. In fact, it delivers the real message by creating the effect in the viewer." Applying this thinking to the religious realm, Babin says, "I would not go so far as to say that the words are nothing. There is no ground without a figure. But what gives the words their impact are the gestures, the environment, the relationships and the extraordinary power of the man Jesus."

◊ "These symbolic, affective methods of arousing spiritual awareness are a necessary prerequisite for and complement to the more traditional methods of communicating the Christian faith."

◊ "For Christians, communication is not just a simple psychological movement inherent in human nature. It is a gift. It is not discovered or invented, but received."

◊ "As Paul said, there may be countless teachers in Christ, but begetting faith is something quite different. We can communicate doctrines, beliefs, and even Christian enthusiasm, but we cannot communicate the spark of faith."

◊ "I do not think it is possible today to separate an audiovisual form of catechesis, one that appeals to the heart and to human feelings, from a purely notional form, one aimed more precisely at the intellect and reason."

◊ "Faith is 'taking part together' in the amplified voice, the shifting light of the candle, the singing and the silence. It is a seeking together in the same direction. Is it an orthodox faith? If orthodoxy means conformity to the definitions and formulas of the church, it is not. But if it means being in intimate contact with a group and an experience of being moved inside oneself, then it is."

◊ "Only experiencing the pleasure of being Christian can accomplish faith ... Christianity has to begin with a leap into paradise, for its beauty is a pleasure that is paradisical and absolute."

◊ "The media provide us with an unprecedented opportunity to reach all those who are outside the church, including purely nominal Christians. The media can cross walls and be secretly present, touching the hearts of those who are seeking."

◊ "There is an urgent need for the formation and training of a new type of person for church ministry ... a person not only of interpersonal but also of media communications: a person exposed both to the breath of the Holy Spirit and that of the people today ... a person who amplifies the word of God."

◊ "I have firm convictions about the way in which faith should be communicated in our contemporary world. But, at the same time, I have become increasingly aware that the God of whom I speak, and Christ himself, are quite beyond my reach. My convictions are only a small part of the truth. They express the hesitant approach of a man who is trying to understand these times, holding in his hands before him the little book of the gospels. It is only by listening to God, day after day, and in accordance with the grace of each period of history and each culture that one can echo something of God's voice and reflect something of his presence."

3. AETATIS NOVAE

Citing its predecessor document, Communio et Progressio, developed in response to Vatican II, Aetatis Novae says, in part:

'The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications' which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a 'global village'. The means of social communications have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large' ...

We express our gratitude to those responsible for the creative communications work underway in the Church everywhere. Despite difficulties – arising from limited resources, from the obstacles sometimes placed in the way of the Church's access to media, and from a constant reshaping of culture, values, and attitudes brought about by the pervasive presence of media – much has been, and continues to be, accomplished. The dedicated bishops, clergy, religious and lay people engaged in this critically important apostolate deserve the thanks of all ...

Also welcome are those positive ventures in media-related ecumenical cooperation involving Catholics and their brothers and sisters of other Churches and ecclesial communities, as well as interreligious cooperation with those of other world religions ...

The power of media extends to defining not only what people will think but even what they will think about. Reality, for many, is what the media recognize as real; what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance ...

Communio et Progressio is rooted in a vision of communication as a way toward communion. Far 'more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion', it declares, communication is 'the giving of self in love'. In this respect, communication mirrors the Church's own communion and is capable of contributing to it ...

Human history and all human relationships exist within the framework established by this self-communication of God in Christ. History itself is ordered toward becoming a kind of word of God, and it is part of the human vocation to contribute to bringing this about by living out the ongoing, unlimited communication of God's reconciling love in creative new ways. We are to do this through words of hope and deeds of love, that is, through our very way of life. Thus communication must lie at the heart of the Church community ...

Christ is both the content and the dynamic source of the Church's communications in proclaiming the Gospel. For the Church itself is 'Christ's Mystical Body' – the hidden completion of Christ glorified – who `fills the whole creation". As a result we move, within the Church and with the help of the word and the sacraments, toward the hope of that last unity where 'God will be all in all' ...

Moreover, as the Church always must communicate its message in a manner suited to each age and to the cultures of particular nations and peoples, so today it must communicate in and to the emerging media culture ... Considering how important a contribution the media of social communications can make to its efforts to foster this unity, the Church views them as means 'devised under God's Providence' for the promotion of communication and communion among human beings during their earthly pilgrimage ...

Communications in and by the Church is essentially communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the proclamation of the Gospel as a prophetic, liberating word to the men and women of our times; it is testimony, in the face of radical secularization, to divine truth and to the transcendent destiny of the human person; it is the witness given in solidarity with all believers against conflict and division, to justice and communion among peoples, nations, and cultures ...

It (communications) is one of the ways of realizing in a concrete manner the Church's character as communion, rooted in and mirroring the intimate communion of the Trinity. Among the members of the community of persons who make up the Church, there is a radical equality in dignity and mission that arises from baptism and underlies hierarchical structure and diversity of office and function; and this equality necessarily will express itself in an honest and respectful sharing of information and opinions ...

The Church, recognizing the media of social communications as 'the privileged way' today for the creation and transmission of culture, acknowledges its own duty to offer formation to communications professionals and to the public, so that they will approach media with 'a critical sense which is animated by a passion for the truth'; it likewise acknowledges its duty to engage in 'a work of defense of liberty, respect for the dignity of individuals, and the elevation of the authentic culture of peoples which occurs through a firm and courageous rejection of every form of monopoly and manipulation' ...

Church personnel require at least a working grasp of the impact which new information technologies and mass media are having upon individuals and society ... They need to know how to invite others into dialogue, avoiding a style of communicating which suggests domination, manipulation, or personal gain.

The document ends by offering pastoral advice to those in the Church who wish to communicate publicly:

Every episcopal conference and diocese should therefore develop an integrated pastoral plan for communications, preferably in consultation with representatives of international and national Catholic communications organizations and with local media professionals. Furthermore, communications ought to be taken into account in formulating and carrying out all other pastoral plans, including those concerning social service, education, and evangelization ...

The Church's strategies in the field of social communications must be based on the results of sound media research that have been subjected to informed analysis and evaluation. It is important that communications research include topics and issues of particular relevance to the mission of the Church in the particular nation and region involved.

4. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL SPEAKS ABOUT ETHICS

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications published a document titled Ethics in Communications, in June 2000:[208]

The Church has reasons of her own for being interested in the means of social communication[209] ... The Church also knows herself to be a *communio*, a communion of persons and eucharistic communities, 'rooted in and mirroring the intimate communion of the Trinity' (Aetatis Novae, 10; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion). Indeed, all human communication is grounded in the communication among Father, Son, and Spirit. But more than that, Trinitarian communion reaches out to humankind: The Son is the Word, eternally 'spoken' by the Father; and in and through Jesus Christ, Son and Word made flesh, God communicates himself and his salvation to women and men ... Communication in and by the Church finds its starting point in the communion of love among the divine Persons and their communication with us ...

The media are called to serve human dignity by helping people live well and function as persons in community. Media do this by encouraging men and women to be conscious of their dignity, enter into the thoughts and feelings of others, cultivate a sense of mutual responsibility, and grow in personal freedom, in respect for others' freedom, and in the capacity for dialogue ...

Many people's religious lives are greatly enriched through the media. They carry news and information about religious events, ideas, and personalities; they serve as vehicles for evangelization and catechesis. Day in and day out, they provide inspiration, encouragement, and opportunities for worship to persons confined to their homes or to institutions ...

In all these settings – economic, political, cultural, educational, religious – as well as others, the media can be used to build and sustain human community. And indeed all communication ought to be open to community among persons ... Communication that serves genuine community is 'more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level, it is the giving of self in love' (*Communio et Progressio*, 11). Communication like this seeks the well being and fulfillment of community members in respect to the common good of all. But consultation and dialogue are needed to discern this common good. Therefore it is imperative for the parties to social communication to engage in such dialogue and submit themselves to the truth about what is good ...

In the relationship between the means of social communication and religion there are temptations on both sides ... The temptations on the side of religion include taking an exclusively judgmental and negative view of media; failing to understand that reasonable standards of good media practice like objectivity and even-handedness may preclude special treatment for religion's institutional interests; presenting religious messages in an emotional, manipulative style, as if they were products competing in a glutted marketplace; using media as instruments for control and domination; practicing unnecessary secrecy and otherwise offending against truth; downplaying the Gospel's demand for conversion, repentance, and amendment of life, while substituting a bland religiosity that asks little of people; encouraging fundamentalism, fanaticism, and religious exclusivism that foment disdain and hostility toward others ...

In all three areas – message, process, structural and systemic issues – the fundamental ethical principle is this: The human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media of social communication; communication should be by persons to persons for the integral development of persons. Integral development requires a sufficiency of material goods and products, but it also requires attention to the "inner dimension" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 29; cf. 46). Everyone deserves the opportunity to grow and flourish in respect to the full range of physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual goods. Individuals have irreducible dignity and importance, and may never be sacrificed to collective interests.

A second principle is complementary to the first: The good of persons cannot be realized apart from the common good of the communities to which they belong. This common good should be understood in

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[208] World Communications Day, Vatican, June 4, 2000.

[209] Unfortunately, "social communications," "media," "means of communications" and other terms are again used interchangeably and lead to confusion."

inclusive terms, as the sum total of worthy shared purposes to whose pursuit community members jointly commit themselves and which the community exists to serve. Thus, while social communication rightly looks to the needs and interests of particular groups, it should not do so in a way that sets one group against another – for example, in the name of class conflict, exaggerated nationalism, racial supremacy, ethnic cleansing, and the like ...

Human communication has in it something of God's creative activity ... The Christian communicator in particular has a prophetic task, a vocation: to speak out against the false gods and idols of the day – materialism, hedonism, consumerism, narrow nationalism, and the rest – holding up for all to see a body of moral truth based on human dignity and rights, the preferential option for the poor, the universal destination of goods, love of enemies, and unconditional respect for all human life from conception to natural death.

4. ARCHBISHOP FOLEY ON WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY 2002

In June 2002 Archbishop John P. Foley delivered an address in celebration of that year's World Communications Day in which he said:

The Internet offers the Church the opportunity to make available to everyone in the world with access to the Internet the saving message of Jesus Christ. In societies which will not permit the presence of priests or sisters or brothers or even lay missionaries, the Internet can bring to those engaged in a spiritual search or even to those who are merely curious an opportunity for information and inspiration to which they otherwise would not have access.[210]

More than a dozen years ago ... was born RIIAL, la Red Informatica de la Iglesia in America Latina, the information network of the Church in Latin America. Coordinated by our Council and by CELAM, the Latin American bishops' conference, the RIIAL has developed a number of capabilities:

◊ sharing information from and with Rome and among the bishops' conferences and indeed dioceses of Latin America

◊ providing a source of important documentation, not only recent Church statements but also biblical and patristic studies which can be useful in seminaries and universities

◊ offering an opportunity for the development of programs for sacramental records

◊ stimulating the development of a Spanish-language information service for the Church

◊ developing useful directories

◊ forming a generation of church officials and technicians who have a vision of the Church which is both contemporary and Catholic – in all senses of the term ...

In a manner which has not yet been fully and formally developed by the Church, the Internet offers an opportunity for dialogue, for response to questions, for interactive instruction and even for pastoral counseling. It does not offer the opportunity for on-line confession – which must always be done in the sacramental context of personal encounter.

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[210] *Zenit*, (Vienna: Jun. 7, 2001).

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